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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

And Other Sermons

The Light of the World

And Other Sermons

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TO

The Memory of my Brother,

GEORGE BROOKS,

WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR,

I DEDICATE THESE SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

I.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the World: he that followeth me shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life. — JOHN viii. 12.

SOMETIMES Jesus gathers His work and nature up in one descriptive word, and offers it, as it were out of a wide-open hand, complete to His disciples. In such a word all the details of His relation to the soul and to the world are comprehensively included. As the disciple listens and receives it, he feels all his fragmentary and scattered experiences drawing together and rounding into unity. As, having heard it, he carries it forth with him into his life, he finds all future experiences claiming their places within it, and getting their meaning from it. Such words of Jesus are like spheres of crystal into which the world is gathered, and where the past and future, the small and great, may all be read.

It seems to me as if there were days on which we wanted to set one of these comprehensive words of Christ before our eyes and study it. There are days when we must give ourselves to some particular detail

of Christian truth or conduct. There are other days when we are faced by the question of the whole meaning of the Christian faith and its relation to the great world of life. Vague and perplexed the soul is to which its faith does not come with distinct and special touches, pressing directly on every movement of its life. But poor and petty is the soul which has no large conception of its faith, always abiding around and enfolding its details and giving them the dignity and unity they need.

One of these comprehensive words of Jesus is our text this morning.

I want to ask you then to think with me what Jesus means when He declares Himself to be the "Light of the World" or the "Light of Life." The words come down to us out of the old Hebrew temple where He spoke them first. They pierce into the centre of our modern life. Nay, they have done much to make our modern life, and to make it different from the old Hebrew temple where they were spoken first. It will be good indeed if we can feel something of the power that is in them, and understand how clear is the conception of Life which they include, how far our present Christianity is an embodiment of that conception, how far it fails of it, how certain it is in being ever truer and truer to that conception that the faith of Christ must come to be the Master of the soul and of the world.

We may begin, then, by considering what would be the idea of Christ and His relation to the world which we should get if this were all we knew of Him,— if He as yet had told us nothing of Himself but what is wrapped up in these rich and simple words, "I am

the Light of the World," "I am the Light of Life." They send us instantly abroad into the world of Nature. They set us on the hill-top watching the sunrise as it fills the east with glory. They show us the great plain flooded and beaten and quivering with the noon-day sun. They hush and elevate us with the mystery and sweetness and suggestiveness of the evening's glow. There could be no image so abundant in its meaning; no fact plucked from the world of Nature could have such vast variety of truth to tell; and yet one meaning shines out from the depth of the figure and irradiates all its messages. They all are true by its truth. What is that meaning? It is the essential richness and possibility of the world and its essential belonging to the sun. Light may be great and glorious in itself. The sun may be tumultuous with fiery splendor; the atmosphere may roll in billows of glory for its million miles; but light as related to earth has its significance in the earth's possibilities. The sun, as the world's sun, is nothing without the world, on which it shines, and whose essential character and glory it displays.

Do you see what I mean? When the sun rose this morning it found the world here. It did not make the world. It did not fling forth on its earliest ray this solid globe, which was not and would not have been but for the sun's rising. What did it do? It found the world in darkness, torpid and heavy and asleep; with powers all wrapped up in sluggishness; with life that was hardly better or more alive than death. The sun found this great sleeping world and woke it. It bade it be itself. It quickened every slow and sluggish fac-

ulty. It called to the dull streams, and said, "Be quick;" to the dull birds and bade them sing; to the dull fields and made them grow; to the dull men and bade them talk and think and work. It flashed electric invitation to the whole mass of sleeping power which really was the world, and summoned it to action. It did not make the world. It did not sweep a dead world off and set a live world in its place. It did not start another set of processes unlike those which had been sluggishly moving in the darkness. It poured strength into the essential processes which belonged to the very nature of the earth which it illuminated. It glorified, intensified, fulfilled the earth; so that with the sun's work incomplete, with part of the earth illuminated and the rest lying in the darkness still, we can most easily conceive of the dark region looking in its half-life drowsily over to the region which was flooded with light, and saying, "There, there is the true earth! That is the real planet. In light and not in darkness the earth truly is itself."

That is the Parable of the Light. And now it seems to me to be of all importance to remember and assert all that to be distinctly a true parable of Christ. He says it is: "I am the Light of the World." A thousand things that means. A thousand subtle, mystic miracles of deep and intricate relationship between Christ and humanity must be enfolded in those words; but over and behind and within all other meanings, it means this, — the essential richness and possibility of humanity and its essential belonging to Divinity. Christ is unspeakably great and glorious in Himself. The glory

which He had with His Father "before the world was," of that we can only meditate and wonder; but the glory which He has had since the world was, the glory which He has had in relation to the world, is all bound up with the world's possibilities, has all consisted in the utterance and revelation and fulfilment of capacities which were in the very nature of the world on which His Light has shone.

Do you see what I mean? Christ rises on a soul. Christ rises on the world. I speak in crude and superficial language. For the moment I make no account of the deep and sacred truth, — the truth which alone is finally and absolutely true, — that Christ has always been with every soul and all the world. I talk in crude and superficial words, and say Christ comes to any soul or to the world. What is it that happens? If the figure of the Light is true, Christ when He comes finds the soul or the world really existent, really having within itself its holiest capabilities, really moving, though dimly and darkly, in spite of all its hindrances, in its true directions; and what He does for it is to quicken it through and through, to sound the bugle of its true life in its ears, to make it feel the nobleness of movements which have seemed to it ignoble, the hopefulness of impulses which have seemed hopeless, to bid it be itself. The little lives which do in little ways that which the life of Jesus does completely, the noble characters of which we think we have the right to say that they are the lights of human history, this is true also of them. They reveal and they inspire. The worthless becomes full of worth, the insignificant be-

comes full of meaning at their touch. They faintly catch the feeble reflection of His life who is the true Light of the World, the real illumination and inspiration of humanity.

But metaphors bewilder and embarrass us when once we have caught their general meaning, and they begin to tempt us to follow them out into details into which they were not meant to lead us. Let us then leave the figure, and try to grasp the truth in its complete simplicity and see what some of its applications are. The truth is that every higher life to which man comes, and especially the highest life in Christ, is in the true line of man's humanity; there is no transportation to a foreign region. There is the quickening and fulfilling of what man by the very essence of his nature is. The more man becomes irradiated with Divinity, the more, not the less, truly he is man. The fullest Christian experience is simply the fullest life. To enter into it therefore is no wise strange. The wonder and the unnaturalness is that any child of God should live outside of it, and so in all his life should never be himself.

When I repeat such truths they seem self-evident. No man, I think, denies them; and yet I feel the absence of their power all through men's struggles for the Christian life. A sense of foreignness and unnaturalness and strangeness lies like a fog across the entrance of the divine country; a certain wonder whether I, a man, have any business there; an unreality about it all; a break and gulf between what the world is and what we know it ought to be,— all these are elements in the obscurity, the feebleness, the vague remoteness, of religion.

And yet how clear the Bible is about it all! How clear Christ is! It is redemption and fulfilment which he comes to bring to man. Those are his words. There is a true humanity which is to be restored, and all whose unattained possibilities are to be filled out. There is no human affection, of fatherhood, brotherhood, childhood, which is not capable of expressing divine relations. Man is a child of God, for whom his Father's house is waiting. The whole creation is groaning and travailing till man shall be complete. Christ comes not to destroy but to fulfil. What is the spirit of such words as those? Is it not all a claiming of man through all his life for God? Is it not an assertion that just so far as he is not God's he is not truly man? Is it not a declaration that whatever he does in his true human nature, undistorted, unperverted, is divinely done, and therefore that the divine perfection of his life will be in the direction which these efforts of his nature indicate and prophesy?

I bid you to think whether to clearly believe this would not make the world more full of courage and of hope. If you could thoroughly believe that the divine life to which you were called was the completion, and not the abrogation and surrender, of your humanity, would you not be more strong and eager in your entrance on it? If below the superficial currents which so tremendously draw us away from righteousness and truth we always felt the tug and majestic pressure of the profoundest currents setting toward righteousness and truth, would not our souls be stronger? Shall we not think that? Shall we leave it to doubting lips to

tell about the "tendency which makes for righteousness"? Shall we not tell of it, — we who believe in Christ, who made in His very being the declaration of the nativeness of righteousness to man, who bade all generations see in Him how the Son of Man is the Son of God in the foundation and intention of His life?

Let us see how all this is true in various applications. Apply it first to the standards of character. We talk of Christian character as if it were some separate and special thing unattempted, unsuggested by the human soul until it became aware of Christ. There would come a great flood of light and reality into it all if we knew thoroughly that the Christian character is nothing but the completed human character. The Christian is nothing but the true man. Nothing but the true man, do I say? As if that were a little thing! As if man, with any inflow of divinity, could be, could wish to be anything more or different from man! But we imagine a certain vague array of qualities which are to belong to the Christian life which are not the intrinsic human qualities; and so our Christian type becomes unreal, and our human type loses its dignity and greatness. Human courage, human patience, human trustiness, human humility, — these filled with the fire of God make the graces of the Christian life. We are still haunted by the false old distinction of the natural virtues and the Christian graces. The Christian graces are nothing but the natural virtues held up into the light of Christ. They are made of the same stuff; they are lifted along the same lines; but they have found their pinnacle. They have caught the illumination which their souls desire. Man-

liness has not been changed into Godliness; it has fulfilled itself in Godliness.

As soon as we understand all this, then what a great, clear thing salvation becomes. Its one idea is health. Not rescue from suffering, not plucking out of fire, not deportation to some strange, beautiful region where the winds blow with other influences and the skies drop with other dews, not the enchaining of the spirit with some unreal celestial spell, but health, — the cool, calm vigor of the normal human life; the making of the man to be himself; the calling up out of the depths of his being and the filling with vitality of that self which is truly he, — this is salvation!

Of course it all assumes that in this mixture of good and evil which we call Man, this motley and medley which we call human character, it is the good and not the evil which is the foundation color of the whole. Man is a son of God on whom the Devil has laid his hand, not a child of the Devil whom God is trying to steal. That is the first truth of all religion. That is what Christ is teaching everywhere and always. "We called the chess-board white, we call it black;" but it is, this chess-board of our human life, white not black, — black spotted on white, not white spotted upon black.

It is easy to make this question of precedence and intrusion seem unimportant. "If man stands here to-day half bad, half good, what matters it how it came about, — whether the good intruded on the bad, or the bad upon the good? Here is the present actual condition. Is not that enough?" No, surely it is not. Everything

depends in the great world upon whether Peace or War is the Intruder and the Rebel, upon whether Liberty or Slavery is the ideal possessor of the field. Everything depends in personal life upon whether Cowardice has invaded the rightful realm of Courage, or Courage has pitched its white tent on dusky fields which belong to Cowardice, or whether Truth or Falsehood is the ultimate king to whom the realm belongs. The great truth of Redemption, the great idea of Salvation, is that the realm belongs to Truth, that the Lie is everywhere and always an intruder and a foe. He came in, therefore he may be driven out. When he is driven out, and man is purely man, then man is saved. It is the glory and preciousness of the first mysterious, poetic chapters of Genesis that they are radiant through all their sadness with that truth.

Does this make smaller or less important that great Power of God whereby the human life passes from the old condition to the new, — the power of conversion? Certainly not! What task could be more worthy of the Father's power and love than this assertion and fulfilment of His child? All of our Christian thinking and talking has been and is haunted by a certain idea of failure and recommencement. Man is a failure, so there shall be a new attempt; and in place of the man we will make the Christian! There is nothing of that tone about what Jesus says. The Christian to Jesus is the man. The Christian, to all who think the thought of Jesus after Him, is the perfected and completed man.

Just see what this involves. Hear with what naturalness it clothes the invitations of the Gospel. They are

not strange summons to some distant, unknown land; they are God's call to you to be yourself. They appeal to a homesickness in your own heart and make it their confederate. That you should be the thing you have been, and not be that better thing, that new man which is the oldest man, the first type and image of your being, is unnatural and awful. The world in the new light of the Gospel expects it of you, is longing for it. The creation, in Saint Paul's great phrase, is groaning and travailing, waiting for the manifestation of this child of God which is hidden in your life.

And all this vindicates itself by a mysterious and beautiful familiarity in the new life when you have begun to live it. With confidence I know that I could appeal to the experience of many of you who hear me, to recognize what I mean. I take a plant whose home is in the tropics, but which has grown to stunted life amid the granite of Vermont. I carry it and set it where its nature essentially belongs. Does it not know the warm earth, and does not the warm earth know it? Do not the palm-trees, and the sky which it sees through their broad leaves, and the warmer stars which glorify the sky at night speak to the amazed but satisfied heart of the poor plant in tones which it understands? And when a soul is set there where its nature always has belonged, in the obedience of God, in the dear love of Christ, does it not know the new life which embraces it? Ah, it has lived in it always in the idea of its being, in the conception of existence which has been always at its heart. It has walked the great halls of the divine obedience. It has stood by this river of di

vine refreshment. It has seen these great prospects of the celestial hope. It has climbed to these hill-tops of prophetic vision. They are not wholly strange. Nothing is wholly strange to any man when he becomes it, which it has always been in his nature to become. Because it has always been in man to become the fulfilled man, which is the Christian, therefore for a man to have become a Christian is never wholly strange.

See also here what a true ground there is for the appeal which you desire to make to other souls. It must be from the naturalness of the new life that you call out to your brethren. You must claim your brother for the holiness to which his nature essentially belongs. "Come home!" "Come home!" "I have found the homestead!" "I have found the Father!" "I have found the true manhood!" "I have found what you and I and all men were made to be!" So the soul out of the tropics cries out to its brother souls still lingering among the granite hills, and the voice has all the persuasiveness of Nature. The soft southern winds which bring it tell the souls to which it comes that it is true.

There are two sorts of attraction which draw, two sorts of fascination which hold, human nature everywhere, — the attraction of the natural and the attraction of the unnatural. The attraction of the natural everywhere is healthiest and highest. The attraction of the natural is the true attraction of Religion, — most of all, the attraction of the Christian Gospel.

And yet again this makes the higher life intelligible, and so makes it real. This alone makes such a thing as Christian Manliness conceivable. Christian Unman

liness is what a great many of men's pious, earnest struggles have been seeking. If the saint on to all eternity is to be the ever-ripening man, never changing into any new and unknown thing which he was not before, never to all eternity unfolding one capacity which was not in the substance of his humanity from its creation, then it follows that the most celestial and transcendent goodnesses must still be one in kind with the familiar virtues which sometimes in their crude and earthly shapes seem low and commonplace. Courage in all the worlds is the same courage. Truth before the throne of God is the same thing as when neighbor talks with neighbor on the street. Mercy will grow tenderer and finer, but will be the old blessed balm of life in the fields of eternity that it was in your workshop and your home. Unselfishness will expand and richen till it enfolds the life like sunshine, but it will be the same self-denial, opening into a richer self-indulgence, which it was when it first stole in with one thin sunbeam on the startled soul. There is no new world of virtues in any heaven or in any heavenly experience of life. God is good and man is good; and as man becomes more good, he becomes not merely more like God, but more himself. As he becomes more godly, he becomes more manly too.

It is so hard for us to believe in the Mystery of Man. "Behold man is this," we say, shutting down some near gate which falls only just beyond, quite in sight of, what human nature already has attained. If man would go beyond that he must be something else than man. And just then something breaks the gate away, and lo, far out beyond where we can see stretches the Mystery

of Man. The beautiful, the awful mystery of man! To him, to man, all lower lines have climbed, and having come to him, have found a field where evolution may go on forever.

The mystery of man! How Christ believed in that! Oh, my dear friends, he who does not believe in that cannot enter into the full glory of the Incarnation, cannot really believe in Christ. Where the mysterious reach of manhood touches the divine, there Christ appears. No mere development of human nature outgoing any other reach that it has made, yet still not incapable of being matched, perhaps of being overcome; not that, not that, — unique and separate forever, — but possible, because of this same mystery of man in which the least of us has share. To him who knows the hither edges of that mystery in his own life, the story of how in, on, at its depths it should be able to receive and to contain divinity cannot seem incredible; may I not say, cannot seem strange?

Men talk about the Christhood, and say, "How strange it is! Strange that Christ should have been, — strange that Christ should have suffered for mankind." I cannot see that so we most magnify Him or bring Him nearest to us. Once feel the mystery of man and is it strange? Once think it possible that God should fill a humanity with Himself, once see humanity capable of being filled with God, and can you conceive of His not doing it? Must there not be an Incarnation? Do you not instantly begin to search earth for the holy steps? Once think it possible that Christ can, and are you not sure that Christ must give himself for our Redemption?

So only, when it seems inevitable and natural, does the Christhood become our pattern. Then only does it shine on the mountain-top up toward which we can feel the low lines of our low life aspiring. The Son of God is also the Son of Man. Then in us, the sons of men, there is the key to the secret of His being and His work. Know Christ that you may know yourself. But, oh, also know yourself that you may know Christ!

I think to every Christian there come times when all the strangeness disappears from the divine humanity which stands radiant at the centre of his faith. He finds it hard to believe in himself and in his brethren perhaps; but that Christ should be and should be Christ appears the one reasonable, natural, certain thing in all the universe. In Him all broken lines unite; in Him all scattered sounds are gathered into harmony; and out of the consummate certainty of Him, the soul comes back to find the certainty of common things which the lower faith holds, which advancing faith loses, and then finds again in Christ.

How every truth attains to its enlargement and reality in this great truth, — that the soul of man carries the highest possibilities within itself, and that what Christ does for it is to kindle and call forth these possibilities to actual existence. We do not understand the Church until we understand this truth. Seen in its light the Christian Church is nothing in the world except the promise and prophecy and picture of what the world in its idea is and always has been, and in its completion must visibly become. It is the primary crystalization of humanity. It is no favored, elect body caught from the

ruin, given a salvation in which the rest can have no part. It is an attempt to realize the universal possibility. All men are its potential members. The strange thing for any man is not that he should be within it, but that he should be without it. Every good movement of any most secular sort is a struggle toward it, a part of its activity. All the world's history is ecclesiastical history, is the story of the success and failure, the advance and hindrance of the ideal humanity, the Church of the living God. Well may the prophet poet greet it, —

> "O heart of mine, keep patience; looking forth
> As from the Mount of Vision I behold
> Pure, just, and free the Church of Christ on earth, —
> The martyr's dream, the golden age foretold."

Tell me, my friends, can we not all think that we see a progress and elevation in men's ideas about their souls' conversion which would seem to show an entrance into the power of this truth? In old times more than to-day he who entered into the new life of Christ thought of himself as rescued, snatched from the wreck of a ruined and sinking world, given an exceptional privilege of safety. To-day more than in old times the saved soul looks with a delighted and awe-struck wonder into his new experience, and sees in it the true and natural destiny of all mankind. "Lo, because I am this, I know that all men may be it. God has but shown me in my soul's experience of what all souls are capable." And so the new life does not separate the soul from, but brings it more deeply into sympathy with, all humanity.

I believe that here also is the real truth and the final satisfaction of men's minds as concerns the Bible. As the spiritual life with which the Bible deals is the flower of human life, so the Book which deals with it is the flower of human books. But it is not thereby an unhuman book. It is the most human of all books. In it is seen the everlasting struggle of the man-life to fulfil itself in God. All books in which that universal struggle of humanity is told are younger brothers,—less clear and realized and developed utterances of that which is so vivid in the history of the sacred people and is perfect in the picture of the divine Man. I will not be puzzled, but rejoice when I find in all the sacred books, in all deep, serious books of every sort, foregleams and adumbrations of the lights and shadows which lie distinct upon the Bible page. I will seek and find the assurance that my Bible is inspired of God not in virtue of its distance from, but in virtue of its nearness to, the human experience and heart. It is in that experience and heart that the real inspiration of God is given, and thence it issues into the written book:—

> "Out of the heart of Nature rolled
> The Burdens of the Bible old.
> The Litanies of the nations came
> Like the volcano's tongue of flame;
> Up from the burning core below
> The Canticles of love and woe."

That book is most inspired which most worthily and deeply tells the story of the most inspired life.

Is there not here the light of every darkness and the key to every riddle? The missionary goes into a hea-

then land. What shall he make of what he finds there? Shall he not see in it all the raw material and the suggested potency of that divine life which he knows that it is the rightful condition of the Sons of God to live? Shall he not be eager and ingenious, rather than reluctant, to find and recognize and proclaim the truth that the Father has left Himself without witness in no home where His children live? As in the crudest social ways and habits of the savage islanders he sees the beginnings and first efforts toward the most perfect and elaborate civilizations which the world contains, — the germs of constitutions, the promise of senates and cabinets and treaties, — so in the ignorant and half-brutal faiths shall he not discover the upward movement of the soul to which he shall then delight to offer all the rich light of the teaching which has come to his centuries of Christian faith, saying, "Lo, this is what it means: Whom you are ignorantly worshipping, Him declare I unto you"?

Among all the philosophies of history where is there one that matches with this simple story that man is the child of God, forever drawn to his Father, beaten back from Him by base waves of passion, sure to come to Him in the end. There is no philosophy of history which ever has been written like the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The first idea, the wanton wandering, the discontent, the brave return, the cordial welcome, — all are there. It is the history of man's action and man's thought; it is the story of his institutions and of his ideas; it holds the explanation of the past and the promise of the future; its beginning is where the first

conception of what man shall be lies in the heart of the Creative Power; its end is in that endless life which man, having been reconciled to God and come to the completion of his idea, is to live in his Father's house forever.

Do we ask ourselves, as well we may, at what point in that long history the world is standing in this rich and interesting period in which we live? Who shall precisely say? But in the wonderful story of the Prodigal Son must there not have been one moment when at the very height of the revel there came a taste of bitterness into the wine, and when the faces of the harlots, in some gleam of fresh morning sunlight which broke into the hot and glaring chamber, seemed tawdry and false and cruel? Must there not have been a moment somewhere then, perhaps just when the carouse seemed most tempestuous and hopeless, a moment when the heart of the exile turned to his home, and the life with his father seemed so strong and simple and natural and real, so cool and sweet and true and healthy, that the miserable tumult and the gaudy glare about him for a moment became unreal and lost its hold? Much, much had yet to come, — the poverty and swine and husks, — before the boy gathered himself together and arose and said, "I will go to my father;" but the tide was turned, the face was set homeward, after that one moment of true sight of the true light in the hall of unnatural revel and resplendent sin. I sometimes think that there, in many ways just there, is where our age is standing with its startled and bewildered face.

I may be wrong or right about our age, I may be

wrong or right about many of the ways in which it has appeared to me as if the truth which I have tried to preach to you to-day touches the great problems of religion and of life. But now I turn to you, young men and women, earnest and brave and hopeful — many of you also sorely perplexed and puzzled. What does this truth mean for you? Does it not mean everything for you if Truth and Courage and Unselfishness and Goodness are indeed natural to man and all Evil is unnatural and foreign?

There is indeed a superficial and a deeper nature. I am talking of the deeper nature. I am talking of the nature which belongs to every one of us as the child of God. I am talking, not of the waves which may be blown this way or that way upon the surface, but of the great tide which is heaving shoreward down below.

The man who lives in that deeper nature, the man who believes himself the Son of God, is not surprised at his best moments and his noblest inspirations. He is not amazed when he does a brave thing or an unselfish thing. He is amazed at himself when he is a coward or a liar. He accepts self-restraint only as a temporary condition, an immediate necessity of life. Not self-restraint but self-indulgence, the free, unhindered utterance of the deepest nature, which is good, — that is the only final picture of man's duty which he tolerates. And all the life is one; the specially and specifically religious being but the point at which the diamond for the moment shines, with all the diamond nature waiting in reserve through the whole substance of the precious stone.

Great is the power of a life which knows that its highest experiences are its truest experiences, that it is most itself when it is at its best. For it each high achievement, each splendid vision, is a sign and token of the whole nature's possibility. What a piece of the man was for that shining instant, it is the duty of the whole man to be always. When the hand has once touched the rock the heart cannot be satisfied until the whole frame has been drawn up out of the waves and stands firm on its two feet on the solid stone.

Are there not very many of us to whom the worst that we have been seems ever possible of repetition; but the best that we have ever been shines a strange and splen did miracle which cannot be repeated? The gutter in which we lay one day is always claiming us. The mountain-top on which we stood one glorious morning seems to have vanished from the earth.

The very opposite of all that is the belief of him who knows himself the child of God. For him, for him alone, sin has its true horror. "What! have I, who once have claimed God, whom once God has claimed, have I been down into the den of Devils? Have I brutalized my brain with drink? Have I let my heart burn with lust? Have I, the child of God, cheated and lied and been cruel and trodden on my brethren to satisfy my base ambition?" Oh, believe me, believe me, my dear friends, you never will know the horror and misery of sin till you know the glory and mystery of man. You never can estimate the disaster of an interruption till you know the worth of what it interrupts. You never will understand wickedness by dwelling on

the innate depravity of man. You can understand wickedness only by knowing that the very word man means holiness and strength.

Here, too, lies the sublime and beautiful variety of human life. It is as beings come to their reality that they assert their individuality. In the gutter all the poor wretches lie huddled together, one indistinguishable mass of woe; but on the mountain-top each figure stands out separate and clear against the blueness of the sky. The intense variety of Light! The awful monotony of Darkness! Men are various; Christians ought to be various a thousand-fold. Strive for your best, that there you may find your most distinctive life. We cannot dream of what interest the world will have when every being in its human multitude shall shine with his own light and color, and be the child of God which it is possible for him to be, — which he has ever been in the true home-land of his Father's thought.

Do I talk fancies? Do I paint visions upon unsubstantial clouds? If it seem to you that I do, I beg you to come back now, as I close, to those words which I quoted to you at the beginning. "I am the Light of the World," said Jesus. Do you not see now what I meant when I declared that it was in making the world know itself that Christ was primarily the Power of the World's Redemption? The Revealer and the Redeemer are not two persons, but only one, — one Saviour.

What then? If Christ can make you know yourself; if as you walk with Him day by day, He can reveal to you your sonship to the Father; if, keeping daily company with Him, you can come more and more to know how

native is goodness and how unnatural sin is to the soul of man; if, dwelling with Him who is both God and Man, you can come to believe both in God and in Man through Him, then you are saved, — saved from contempt, saved from despair, saved into courage and hope and charity and the power to resist temptation, and the passionate pursuit of perfectness.

It is as simple and as clear as that. Our religion is not a system of ideas about Christ. It is Christ. To believe in Him is what? To say a creed? To join a church? No; but to have a great, strong, divine Master, whom we perfectly love, whom we perfectly trust, whom we will follow anywhere, and who, as we follow Him or walk by His side, is always drawing out in us our true nature and making us determined to be true to it through everything, is always compelling us to see through falsehood and find the deepest truth, which is, in one great utterance of it, that we are the sons of God, who is thus always "leading us to the Father."

The hope of the world is in the ever richer naturalness of the highest life. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."

Your hope and mine is the same. The day of our salvation has not come till every voice brings us one message; till Christ, the Light of the world, everywhere reveals to us the divine secret of our life; till everything without joins with the consciousness all alive within, and "the Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."

II.

THE NEW AND GREATER MIRACLE.

Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? —John xi. 37.

It is interesting to remember how all which has happened to Christianity happened first to Christ. All the welcome and rejection, all the eager love, the passionate hatred, and the perplexed questionings which have greeted the religion of the Saviour greeted the Saviour first, and have left their record on the pages of the Gospels, in which the story of His earthly life is told. If men have always wondered whether the final salvation of this world has been attained in Jesus, has there not been in their questioning the echo of John the Baptist's message, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" If men have taunted Christianity because with all its vast claims to mastery it still has been despised and trodden under foot of men, we can hear through their mockery the words which greeted Jesus in his agony, "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." If men's pride in their own self-sufficiency and in the competence of their earthly associations and traditions has been wounded, they have cried out to the Redeemer, who offered His redemption with such importunate insistence, "Art thou greater

than our father Abraham? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us this well?" If the spiritual region from which Christianity issued has seemed too obscure, too remote from the great accredited interests of mankind, the voice which declared that such a religion could not save the world has only taken up again the old objections, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." It is a sign of the vitality and reality of Jesus, it is a sign of how Christianity is but the extension and perpetuation of Christ in the world, that all which is said of Christianity to-day was said years and years ago of Christ.

An illustration of all this is found in the words which I have chosen for my text. A miracle of Jesus was fresh in people's minds. He had touched a blind man's eyes and given him his sight. Then some short time had passed, and a new need for help had come. Lazarus of Bethany was very sick. And Jesus had not healed him. He had not even come to him. He had let Lazarus die. And to the people, as they stood around the tomb where he was buried, there had inevitably come this question, "What does it mean? Why was there not another miracle? Surely it is strange that He who could restore the power of sight should have found any difficulty here. Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that this man should not have died?" Mary and Martha, the dead man's sisters, felt the same wonder. "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!" so each of them exclaimed as she came into the Master's presence. It was evi-

dently the feeling of the whole scene, — this wonder at the unrepeated miracle, at the unused power which might have prevented all this sorrow and kept the dear life alive.

And we can imagine something of the questions which such a wonder must have started in the people's minds. Some of them must have found themselves questioning the reality of the old miracle. "Did He indeed then open the blind man's eyes? Could we have been mistaken?" To others it must have seemed as if Jesus could not have cared for Lazarus. "It must have been, if He had cared for him, that He would have helped him here." And then there must have been others to whom there came some better light. "Perhaps after all to have caused that this man should not have died would not have been the greatest mercy. Perhaps Jesus did love Lazarus and could have saved him, and did not choose to. Perhaps not the repetition of a former mercy but something new and different was best." At any rate the power and the love of Jesus were to them beyond all question; and so they waited.

Between these last and the other two groups there evidently is a clear distinction. These last believe in Jesus; to the others Jesus is still on test and trial. Here is the parting of the ways. Here is where some turn this way and some that, and some stand hesitating at the fork. Here is where men either go up to greatness and full faith, or rest in partialness and scepticism which yet often calls itself faith. Oh, strange clear scene outside the tomb at Bethany, where men stood wondering why Christ did not do what they ex-

pected Him to do, and giving their faithful or their faithless explanations!

And now has not the same scene been repeated ever since? This is what I want to speak of to you this morning. Some miracle is wrought; some manifestation of the strength of the spiritual power of Christ is made. The whole world which recognizes the miracle shouts for joy. "How strong Christ is!" it cries, and seems to feel as if for all time to come there could be nothing again like difficulty or doubt or lack of faith. Then by and by a new emergency occurs. Men say "There is no danger; we know exactly what to do. The Christ who saved us yesterday will come again." They watch and listen confidently, but He does not come. The emergency works itself out to its catastrophe. Then comes dismay. "Has Christ grown powerless or pitiless?" or, "Were we then mistaken, and was that no Christ which saved us yesterday? If He did really open the eyes of the blind, surely He could have caused that this man should not have died." So spring suspicions and misgivings; so is scepticism born. But some souls stand serene and patient, with more spiritual insight into Christ and what He will do. "He will not work the same work twice; He will do something new and greater. Let us wait and see." And by and by such faith is justified, and He who did not choose to cause that this man should not have died cries, "Lazarus, come forth;" and the greater miracle has taken place where the smaller miracle seemed to fail.

No doubt in all times the illustrations of this truth have been abundant, but it would seem as if they were

especially plentiful to-day. For now the new is everywhere opening out of the old, and the methods of God's treatment of His world are manifestly and bewilderingly changing. Take the whole subject of the difficulties of religious thought. How often in the past it has seemed at least to be the case that when difficult questions arose men were raised up to answer them! In the great crises of the Church's life great souls like Athanasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, have stood forth, and with some great and timely word have seemed to satisfy men's souls and set their questionings at rest. But how is it to-day? There never was more doubt or tumult. Never was the great human heart, seeking for truth, more bewildered and distracted. How natural then is the cry which here and there breaks forth, "Where is the mighty champion of truth who is to come to-day and answer all these questions, as other champions have answered the hard questions of other days? Where is the *malleus hæreticorum* who is to beat into fine dust these hard and puzzling adversaries of the truth?" Now and then we hear reports that he has come. The rumor runs about that some book has been printed, or some voice has been raised which is to settle and make plain forever all that has grown so mixed and unintelligible. The rumor always ends in disappointment. The book or the teacher clears up perhaps some special point, or calms perhaps some corner of the tempest, but the great tumult of cloud still fills the sky. And then there comes to many men, there has come to very many men in these our days, another possibility, another hope. "What if it be that God has for His people in these

days a better blessing than any which He gave to them of old? What if instead of sending them a subtle and ingenious leader who can answer questions and put doubts to rest, He chooses by the very process of unanswered questions and unresting doubts to bring the whole soul of man onto a higher level, into a broader light, and make it ready for a larger and completer faith?" The difference between the old faith patched and made habitable and a new faith where men with hearts wide open to the truth may go in and live without a fear, — this is the difference between the two sets of dreams which men are dreaming. One man expects to see old forms of faith restored, and thinks that doubt and all disturbance will be looked back on by and by as a mere dreadful cloud through which the human soul has passed, coming out from it finally just as it entered in. Another man looks for a great re-birth of faith and expects to see mankind grateful forever that out of the very grave of unbelief there came a resurrection to a fuller spiritual life. All men who think at all about the strange condition of religious things to-day belong to one or other of these classes. Which is the nobler dream? Which dream is the more worthy both of God and man? Which opens the more hopeful prospect for the years to come?

Nor is this true only about religious things. The real question everywhere is whether the world, distracted and confused as everybody sees that it is, is going to be patched up and restored to what it used to be, or whether it is going forward into a quite new and different kind of life, whose exact nature nobody can pretend to foretell, but which is to be distinctly new,

unlike the life of any age which the world has seen already. Men say, "The world has been disturbed before. Classes have clashed with one another. Governed and governors, employed and employers, rich and poor, have come to blows in other days, but things have always adjusted themselves again. The stronger have grown kinder; the weaker have grown humbler; the paternal governor has grown more fatherly; the obedient subject has grown more filial, and things have gone on again as smoothly as before." "So shall it be again," men say. That is what they expect as the outcome of all this conflict. But other men see clearer. It is impossible that the old conditions, so shaken and broken, can ever be repaired and stand just as they stood before. The time has come when something more than mere repair and restoration of the old is necessary. The old must die and a new must come forth out of its tomb. It is not going to be enough that the strong should once more grow kinder and the weak grow humbler. The balance and distribution of strength and weakness is being altered, must be altered more and more. The sources of artificial strength and artificial weakness are being dried up. Governors and governed, employers and employed, are coming to be co-workers for the same ends. Not the old mercies repeated, but new mercies going vastly deeper than the old, — these are what men are beginning to see that the world is needing and that God is giving to the world He loves.

We think of the world's misery. Our souls are sick with the sight of hunger and nakedness and want. We cry out for the miracles of old; we remember the manna

falling from the skies; we see the loaves and fishes multiplied beside the lake; we wonder where is the miracle-worker now. Cannot He who fed the hungry Jews feed these hungry Americans? We are ready to doubt the old story of His mercy, or to think He has forgotten to be gracious and ceased to care for these modern nations whom He has not "chosen." And then, just as we are ready to give up to despair in one or other of these forms, we catch a glimpse of something better, of something which makes us see that the manna and the miraculous loaves and fishes, made perpetual, would be demoralizing and degrading. Some light comes on the necessity and nobility of struggle. We see the greater glory of the new miracle, — the miracle of the advancing civilization, whose purpose is not to do away with struggle but to make the conditions of struggle fair and the prospects of struggle hopeful. Into the spirit of that miracle we cast ourselves, not expecting to see the world's misery suddenly removed, but sure that at last the world, in and through its misery, will triumph over its misery by patience and diffused intelligence and mutual respect and brotherly kindness and the grace of God.

To expect the miracles of the present and the future, not the miracles of the past, — is not that the secret of all living and progressive life? There is no other life for a true man to live to-day. The man is weak and useless who, however devoutly, looks only for the repetition of past miracles, good and great as those miracles were in their own time. Solemnly and surely — to some men terribly and awfully, to other men joyously

and enthusiastically — it is becoming clear to men that the future cannot be what the past has been. The world of the days to come is to be different from the world that has been. Every interest of life is altered; government, society, business, education, all is altered, all is destined to alter more and more. Only these two elements remain the same, — God and man! What then shall we expect? That God will guide man and supply him as He has in all the times which are past and gone, but that the new government and guidance will be different for the new days. He who believes that, looks forward to changes of faith and changes of life without a fear, for underneath all the changes is the unchangeableness of God. The ship looks forward fearlessly to the new ocean with its new stars and new winds, for the same captain will sail her there who has sailed her here, and the fact that he will sail her there otherwise than he sails her here will be only the sign of how sleepless and watchful is his care.

Is it not very interesting to see how sometimes in the typical life of Jesus there had to be the same struggle with which we are familiar, — to let go of one kind of mercy and pass on into another? Twice especially the Lord cried out to be saved from the future which was just upon Him. "Father, save me from this hour!" "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Both of these are cries for deliverance. "Father, thou hast saved me, save me again!" It is a cry for the repeated miracle. But — how wonderful it is! — both times, before the words are fully spoken, comes a fuller light; the glory of a new and better miracle appears.

"No! I cannot be saved from this hour," "No! I cannot see this cup pass from me except I drink it;" but "Father, glorify thy name," "Father, not my will but thine be done!" The miracle of escape is abandoned; the miracle of victory is taken up. Thenceforth not to be saved from suffering but to save the world by suffering is His hope and prayer. Is He not the type of the world He saved? Is it not growing evident that there are many things which the world thus far has striven to escape which now it must strive, not to escape, but to overcome? Duties which it has ignored, tasks which it has counted too great for its strength, problems for which it has thought that there was no answer, which now it must take up, with which it must grapple, by its victory in the struggle with which it must be judged. The best part of the world, seeing its new history before it, is saying just as Jesus said, first fearfully, "Father, save me from this hour," and then bravely, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name!"

It does not prove that the old miracle was not real, or that it was not the best miracle for its time; but a new time is worthy and capable of a new miracle, and if it rises to its full privilege it does not ask that the old shall be preserved, but rather that out of the death of the old a better new may come to life.

I bid you think what is the different and higher kind of faith which such a change involves? They who, hearing that Lazarus was ill, believed that Christ would come and heal him as He had opened the blind man's eyes, had faith in the old miracle. They who were will-

ing that Lazarus should die, knowing that death could not take him out of Christ's power, and that Christ would still do for him what was best, had faith in Christ. That is the difference. That is the great, everlasting difference of faiths. There is the faith in what God has done, which believes that He can do it again, and there is the faith in the God who did it, which believes that He can do whatever else is needed in any day to come. Some men only let us believe in their actions; other men's actions open to us themselves and make us believe in them. Some men, dealing with God, are satisfied to get at His ways of acting and fix their faith on them; other men cannot be content unless through everything they come to God Himself, and knowing Him in His omnipotence, are ready to see ever new miracles issuing from His power as ever new sunbeams come streaming from the sun. The first man only looks to see the old machinery of the world and the Church repaired and kept in order; the other man looks to see world and church ever made new, ever bearing new testimony that they are fresh and living utterances of Him who has always deep and richer manifestation of Himself to make.

My friends, do not be content with believing in God's ways of action. Insist on believing in God. Then the future will not take you by surprise. Then you will be ready not merely for the repetition of the miracles of the past, but for ever new and richer miracles, for you will feel above you and beneath you and around you the inexhaustibleness of the God in whom you believe.

I have spoken mostly — perhaps too much — about the

way in which one truth affects the larger expectations of the world; but it is no less true concerning each man's own personal career. Let me turn for a little while to that. For years you have lived, it may be, a secluded and protected life. "Lead me not into temptation," so you have prayed every morning, and every day has brought the answer to your prayer. But some day all that breaks and goes to pieces. A great temptation comes and is not hindered. Then you cry out for the old mercy and it is not given. What does it mean? Was the old mercy no mercy? Was it by mere accident that you so long escaped being tempted? Or has God grown tired of protecting you? Has He ceased to care? Could not He who saved you so often save you again? And then, behold what comes! A new mercy! You go into the temptation. Your old security perishes, but by and by out of its death comes a new strength. Not to be saved trom dying but to die and then to live again in a new security, a strong and trusty character, educated by trial, purified by fire, — that is what comes as the issue of the whole. Not a victory for you, preserving you from danger, but a victory in you, strengthening you by danger, — that is the experience from which you go forth, strong with a strength which nothing can subdue.

And if it is so with you, why shall it not be so also with the soul for which you care? Here is your brother or your child. You have prayed that he might be shielded, and God has shielded him. The wickedness of the world has been for him as if it went on in another planet. The unbelief of men has never found him out,

wrapped as he is in the unquestioned and unquestionable truth which you have taught him. Every night you have thanked God for the miracle of preservation safely continued for another day. And then some day all that is over. The safe walls seem all to give way together; the lurid flames burst in on the bewildered soul; the unbelief, shouting and arrogant, lifts itself up, and all the peace of settled, unquestioned faith is gone. You cry out for the old familiar miracle and it does not come. Oh, terrible day! Oh, bitter anxiety! Happy and wise and brave are you if, knowing that the day for the old miracle is past, you hope and wish and pray for it no longer, but make ready for the new miracle and for the help which it will be yours to render to the soul in the new life upon which it is to enter through its temptation and its doubt. Happy and wise and brave are you if, discerning that Jesus has something better to do for Lazarus than to save him from dying, you stand ready to receive him as he comes out of the tomb, to loosen and take off his grave-clothes, to give him the raiment and the food of living men, and to welcome him into the new and larger life which has become possible to him through death.

Suppose it is the death to which we more literally give that great and awful name. You have prayed that your child may live, and God, once and again, has spared his life. "Can He not spare it again?" you cry upon some dreadful night as you stand by your child's sick-bed, counting the pulse, watching the feebler and feebler flutter of the breath. The morning comes and he is dead! Has God been then deaf to your

prayer? Oh, if there is a new miracle, if beyond the miracle which saves from dying there is the miracle which brings through death to life beyond, then God has not been deaf! Your child living with Him speaks back to you and says, "He who has saved me often has saved me now completely. I am alive: not from death but through death He has saved me. The last, best, greatest miracle has come, and I am alive, I am saved; I am alive and safe forever."

To that last miracle we must all come. A thousand times, yea, every perilous moment, God saves us from dying. There is a moment on the way for every one of us when that preservation will be possible no longer. We shall pray, our friends will pray for us, "Again, O Father, spare him; let him live." And then the answer which is looked for will not come, and he who has been so often saved from dying at last will die. Will it be a sign of God's forgetfulness? If so, then God has forgotten all His children, and let them every one, either in childhood or as life-worn veterans, slip through His careless hands; for all have died or will die. But, no; if, as we know is true, the real life lies beyond, and can be reached only through death, then the old miracles are nothing to this new one. They are to it as little as was the miracle by which at Nazareth Christ walked through the hostile multitude and went His way unharmed to the great miracle of resurrection, in which through Death the Lord of Life came forth to be alive for evermore.

Could not Christ have saved Lazarus from dying? Could not Christ save you or me from perplexity or

from temptation or from doubt? Surely those are questions which have their lower and their higher answers. He could, because the power of life and death was in Him. But the power to use the power depended upon other things. It depended on the necessity which lay back of all things in Jesus to do the absolutely best thing, — not the second-best, but the absolutely best of all. If it were best for Lazarus to die, then Christ could not have caused that he should not have died. That is a sublime incapacity; to stand with the gift of life in the all-powerful hands, to see the cry for life in the eager eyes, to hear it in the dumb appeal of the terrified lips, and yet to say, "No, not life but death is best," and so to be unable to give life, — that is a sublime, a divine incapacity! Could not Christ have answered your prayer? No, He could not; not because the thing you asked for was not in His treasury, but because behind the question of His giving or refusing it there lay the fundamental necessity of His nature and His love, that He should do for you only the absolutely best. The thing you asked for was not absolutely best, therefore He could not give it. Back of how many unanswered prayers lies that divine impossibility!

Is it not true again that we must know not only God's way of acting but God Himself before all this can be perfectly accepted into our life? Oh, how we make God a method, a law, a habit, a machine, instead of a great, dear, live, loving Nature, all afire with affection, all radiant with light, quick as light to discriminate and choose and shine with His own color on every nature where He falls! This was what Jesus was so full

of, — the living God. He would not let God seem a method or a law. God was a life. And our theology, our ecclesiasticism, our religion is always trying to beat and trample Him down into a law again. How we have taken that great word Faith and made it mean the holding of set dogmas, when really what it means is the wide openness of a whole life to God! How we have limited and stereotyped the range and possibility of miracle till only what God has done we think that God can do, and so do not stand ready for the ever new light and mercy and salvation which the Infinite Love, the Infinite Power, the Infinite God has to give!

Open your hearts to-day. God cannot merely do for you over and over again what He has done in the past. He must do more, — a new and deeper sight of His truth, a new and deeper obedience to His will. Oh, by and by, when Lazarus sat with them all at Bethany and the house was solemn with the resurrection life, how good then it seemed that Christ had not caused that this man should not have died! And the day will come sometime, somewhere for you when it will be your everlasting thankfulness that your Lord refused to just repeat the old familiar mercies of the past, but forced you through everything to let Him do for you the larger and larger mercies which your soul required. When He so tries to bless you with His largest blessing, may He make you ready to submit to be blessed!

III.

THE PRIORITY OF GOD.

We love Him because He first loved us. — 1 JOHN iv. 19.

JOHN the Disciple had learned from Jesus, his Master, the truth of the priority of God, — the truth that before everything is God. Some truths, when we have learned them, are to us like precious jewels which we keep in caskets, hidden most of the time from sight, our great satisfaction regarding them being simply their possession, — simply that they are ours. Other truths, when we have learned them, are like new countries into which our lives have entered, and in which they thenceforth constantly live. There is a new sky over our head and a new earth under our feet. They fold themselves about us and touch every thought and action. Everything which we do or think or are is different because of them. Of this second sort is the truth of the priority of God. Unless God had been first we — our whole human race in general and each of us in particular — never would have been at all. We are what we are because He is what He is. Everything which we do God has first made it possible for us to do. Every act of ours, as soon as it is done, is grasped into a great world of activity which comes from Him; and there the influence and effect of our action is determined. Every-

thing that we know, is true already before our knowledge of it. Our knowing it is only the opening of our intelligence to receive what is and always has been a part of His being who is the universal Truth. Every deed or temper or life is good or bad as it is in harmony or out of harmony with Him. Everywhere God is first; and man, coming afterward, enters into Him and finds in God the setting and the background of his life. There is no part of life which is not different if that is true. What John learned in mind and soul from Jesus was that that is true. I ask you this morning to dwell with me on the truth which He who is our Master teaches to us as He taught it to this great disciple long ago.

We may say a few words first upon the whole subject of the backgrounds of life in general. Man never is sent first into the world and bidden to evolve out of his own being the conditions in which he is to live. Always something is before him; always there is a landscape in which he finds his figure standing when he becomes conscious of himself. If we go back to the story of the Book of Genesis, behold! the earth is made before the human creature comes. The light and the firmament, and the sun and the moon, the grass and the ocean and the living creatures, — they are all here. The earth is this sumptuous palace of luxuries, this rich treasury of influences, before God says, "Let us make man."

Natural science has the same story to tell. It is into a furnished and a garnished earth that man steps forth. His earliest figure stands against the background of abundant pre-existent life. And coming down out of

the antique stories into the picture which we see to-day, is there not something before man everywhere? Does not every part of him, each sense and faculty, find the provision for its exercise, the provocation and education of its use, in something which was before he came, against which each new-discovered power of his lays itself and knows itself and comes to its exquisite enjoyment and ripe growth? The food is before the hunger, and says, "I have waited for you to come." The river is before the thirst. Beauty was in the sky and on the hills before the eye was fashioned. Music was breathing on the winds before the ear was framed. Fragrance was in the violet and the forest before the nostrils came to catch its odor. The picture was before the imagination which discerned it; the sea before the ship that sailed it. Man finds the rocks waiting with their problems, frost and heat holding their inspiration and their comfort in expectation of his coming. And he never says, "Here I am," that the servants do not stand in ranks at the door of his great homestead to welcome the heir into his own, and to pledge him their obedient service. The material is background for the spiritual, — the earth, which is body, for man, who is soul.

A child was born yesterday. How he lies to-day in his serene, superb unconsciousness! And all the forces and resources of the earth are gathered about his cradle offering themselves to him. Each of his new-born senses is besieged. Each eager voice cries out to him, "Here I am. I have waited for you. Here I am." He takes what they all bring as if it were his right. Not

merely on his senses, but even on his mind and most unconscious soul, the world into which he has come is pressing itself. Its conventionalities and creeds, its standards beaten out of the experience of uncounted generations, its traditions of hope and danger, its prejudices and limitations and precedents, all its discoveries and hopes and fears, — they are the scenery in which this new life stands, they are the mountains in whose shadow and the skies in whose light he is to unfold his long career. They are here before him, and he comes into them. You cannot separate him and them from each other. He and his world make one system, one rich, complex unit of life, as he lies this Sunday morning in his cradle, sleeping his unsuspecting sleep.

Shall we talk about all this as if it were a bondage into which the new child is born? Shall we dream for him of a freedom which he might have had if nothing had been before him, if he had found nothing here when he came? Surely that is no true way to think about it. There are men who, if they cannot destroy the world of assured truths and accepted ways into which they have been born, would at least destroy the consciousness of it. They would ignore it. They would seem at least to be trying experiments as if nothing had yet been proved. They would live as if they were the first man, with no history to rest upon, — almost as if they could reverse the course of Genesis and make the round earth and the whole of Nature issue from and follow them instead of their issuing from and following it. We have all known men more or less of this sort; and, interesting as many of them have been, suggestive as

their lives have often been, we have all felt, I am sure, the weakness that was in them. They have lacked coherence and unity with the great world. They have lacked humility. They have been self-asserting. The note which their life made has not blended with the music of the whole, but has been strange and violent. It has seemed as if a man of this kind thought that he must make the world before he could live in it, as if his knowing the truth was what made it true, and his doing of righteousness was what made it righteous.

Far be it from me to deny the exceptional value of such men; but their value is the value of protest and exception. There is always something gaunt and feverish and wild about their look. The normal, healthy human life lives in its environments and keeps its backgrounds. It is not their slave, but their child. They were before it; and its strength is to know that it comes into their richness. It recognizes their priority. It fastens itself into them, and realizes and fulfils its life by them, and makes in its due time along with them the background for the lives of the years to come.

Now all of this is not religious, save in the very largest sense; but all of this becomes distinctively religious the moment that all this background of life gathers itself into a unity of purpose and intention and becomes a Providence, or care of God. When once that truth has opened on us, then all the interest of life centres in and radiates from this, — that He, God, is before it all. All the welcome which Nature gave us on the bright morning when we came was His welcome. All the depth of Truth out of which our opinions have shaped themselves

and from which our creeds draw their inspiration and dignity, was He, the everlasting truth. See what a change has come. It is as when up the morning sky, all coldly beautiful with ordered ranks of cloud on cloud, is poured the glow of sunrise, and every least cloud, still the same in place and shape, burns with the transfiguring splendor of the sun. So is it when the priority of existence is seen to rest in a Person, and the background of life is God. Then every new arrival instantly reports itself to Him, and is described in terms of its relationship to Him. Every activity of ours answers to some previous activity of His. Do we hope? It is because we have caught the sound of some promise of His. Do we fear? It is because we have had some glimpse of the dreadfulness of getting out of harmony with Him. Are we curious and inquiring? It is that we may learn some of His truth. Do we resist evil? We are fighting His enemies. Do we help need? We are relieving His children. Do we love Him? It is an answer of gratitude for His love to us. Do we live? It is a projection and extension of His being. Do we die? It is the going home of our immortal souls to Him.

Oh, the wonderful richness of life when it is all thus backed with the priority of God! It is the great illumination of all living. And the wonder of it is the way in which, in that illumination, the soul of man recognizes its right. This is what it was made for. Everything, until that light was poured into it, was half-born, cold, and incomplete, like the drawing without the color, like the morning sky before the sunrise. Take the single experience of joy. You have been very

glad. Some particular delight or some great perpetual radiance of happiness has poured itself down upon your life. You have waked singing in the morning. You have fallen asleep with songs upon your lips at night. Men have beheld you in the street, and said, "How glad he is," and felt their own life brighter, their own burden lighter as they passed you by. Suppose that some day behind your happiness opens the depth of God. Suppose that it all turns to gratitude. It all is seen to come streaming out of the exhaustless fountain of His love. Tell me, is it the same? Is there no deeper color in its radiance, no deeper music in its song? Has it gained nothing of spirituality and peace? Has not the joy lifted its face skyward and been filled with a new light?

Or if it has been not joy but deep distress, — pain of the poor racked body or of the perplexed and wounded spirit, — it is still the same. You have gone up and down the earth in sadness, and behind that sadness too has opened God, — God not in anger and revenge, not hurling the arrows of your torment from his indignant wrath, not vexing and worrying you with peevish spite, but God full of pity, pitiful just in proportion to His holiness; God anxious to help, and watching that the worst tragedy of pain may not happen, that the pain may not come and go and leave no education and blessing. Let this open behind your pain, and is not pain transfigured? Not removed but transfigured, made something more than tolerable, pervaded with a low, strong light, and filled, as the joy was, with peace.

The same is true of all experiences. The same is

true of that sum of all experiences which we call life. A man's world, stretching back and back, farther and farther, finds back of all, before all, God. The world becomes religious. Oh, those old words, that old phrase, "the religious world," — what a poor, petty, vulgar thing it often has been made to mean! "The religious world," in the language of the newspapers, is almost sure to mean a little section of humanity claiming monopoly of divine influences and making the whole thought of man's intercourse with God cheap and irreverent by vicious quarrels and mercenary selfishness. "The religious world" is the world of ecclesiastical machineries and conventions and arrangements. But look! See what the religious world really is in its idea, and shall be when it shall finally be realized. A world everywhere aware of and rejoicing in the priority of God, feeling all power flow out from Him, and sending all action back to report itself to Him for judgment, — a world where goodness means obedience to God, and sin means disloyalty to God, and progress means growth in the power to utter God, and knowledge means the understanding of God's thought, and happiness means the peace of God's approval. That is the religious world. That is the only world which is religious. It is the world of which Isaiah and Habakkuk dreamed, in which "the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea."

And now we want to go on and see how all this truth comes to the full display of its richness in the Christian faith. The Christian faith is the sum and flower of the religious life of man. Whatever has struggled in all

other religions comes to its free and full expression there. And so the truth of the priority of God is the first and fundamental truth of Christianity. Remember how it all begins. Jesus is sitting with Nicodemus, and telling him what He wants him to believe. What is it? Is it of a fermentation in humanity, — a loving impulse, a reaching up of man after a Deity whom he has discovered, to which at last God, out of His distant heaven, graciously responds? It distinctly is not that. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It is a movement from the side of God. Everything which Christianity conceives of man as doing, everything which Christianity bids man do, is in answer to some previous activity of God. God has given a law which you have broken. That is sin. God has offered a forgiveness and new life which you may, which you must, accept. That is salvation. Behold how all that we saw in the relation of man to Nature, all that was richly involved in the very fact of Religion, burns out in most complete expression in the Religion of Religions, in the Gospel of the Son of God, who becomes the Son of Man.

If I enter into the spirit of the narratives and see how Jesus approached the people whom He wished to save, I find the same thing everywhere. Did He meet them in the streets, did He step across the thresholds of their houses, and say to them, "You must love God," calling upon them for an adventurous excursion into an unknown land to which they could not tell whether they would find an open door or not? It was always a revelation. It was always, "God loves you." He went

about saying that from house to house, from man to man. He said it to the Publican, the Magdalen, the Pharisee. He said it by His sermon, His miracle, and finally His cross. He built this background behind every life. He spread this great sky over every soul, and then He looked to see the great compulsion, "You must love God," "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," grasp every nature, not as a hard commandment, but as a warm necessity to which the nature yields as a cloud yields to the atmosphere and melts into the sky.

What will you do if you are sent to carry the Gospel to your friend, your child? Will you stand over him and say, "You must love God; you will suffer for it if you do not"? When was ever love begotten so? "Who is God?" "Why should I love Him?" "How can I love Him," answers back the poor, bewildered heart, and turns to the things of earth which with their earthly affections seem to love it, and satisfies itself in loving them. Or perhaps it grows defiant, and says, "I will not," flinging back your exhortation as the cold stone flings back the sunlight. But you say to your friend, your child, "God loves you," say it in every language of yours, in every vernacular of his, which you can command, and his love is taken by surprise, and he wakes to the knowledge that he does love God without a resolution that he will.

So it is that children come to love their fathers and their mothers everywhere. There is no struggle after an uncertain thing. You do not urge them or exhort them. They are set into the lives which are before their lives, and the love of those lives flows into them

and becomes their love. The real reason why men do not love God is that they do not really believe that God loves them. That does not take their blame away, but it does shift it and put it in the right place. They are to blame, grievously to blame, because they have made their lives so base and poor that they cannot believe that God loves them. There is where the attack must be made and the victory won. Fix their thoughts not on themselves but on God. Make them see that God is such that He must love His children, however base and poor they be, and then love becomes possible from them to Him, because its great cause, its depth of spiritual reason and reality, is there.

Sometimes far out at sea the sailor sees the sky grow tremulous and troubled. The cloud seems to be all unable to contain itself; its under surface wavers and stretches downward toward the ocean. It is as if it yearned and thirsted for the kindred water. A great grasping hand is reached downward and feels after the waves. And then the sailor looks beneath, and lo, the surface of the waves is troubled too; and out from the water comes first a mere tremble and confusion, and then by and by a column of water builds itself, growing steadier and steadier, until at last it grasps the hand out of the cloud, and one strong pillar reaches from the sea into the heavens, from the heavens to the sea, and the heavens and the sea are one. So you must make man know that God loves him, and then look to see man love God.

How shall you make man know that God loves him? In every way, — there is no speech nor language in

which that voice may not be heard, — but most of all by loving the man with a great love yourself, by a lofty and generous affection of which he shall know that, coming through you, it comes from beyond you, and say, "It is my Father that my brother utters," and so be led up to the Father's heart. We talk about men's reaching through Nature up to Nature's God. It is nothing to the way in which they may reach through manhood up to manhood's God, and learn the divine love by the human. God make us all such revelations of His love to some of His children!

We may think again not of the way in which we shall get our friends and brethren to love God, but of the way in which we shall get ourselves to love Him. Oh, the old struggles! How many of us have said, "I will love God; I ought to, and I will," and so have wrestled and struggled to do what they could not do, — what in their hearts they knew no real reason for doing, — and have miserably failed, and now are satisfying themselves with loveless obedience, or else have left God altogether and tell their hearts that they must forego all such beautiful, hopeless ambitions. Ah, my friend, what you need is to get away round upon the other side of the whole matter. It is not whether you love God but whether God loves you. If He does, and if you can know that He does, then give yourself up totally and unquestioningly to the assurance of that love. Rejoice in it by day and night. Go singing for the joy of it about your work and your play. Let no man, however wise, persuade you that you have not a right to the satisfaction of that love. You have. It does not wait for

your summons. Of course it does not wait for your response. How could the offer say, "I will not give myself to you till you accept me first?" But as you go singing for joy that God loves you, behold the response is born before you know it, and you are loving God as countless souls have always loved Him, in Saint John's old way, "because He first loved you."

Sometimes it seems good to sweep aside all the complications of spiritual experience and bring it all to absolute simplicity. Here is God, and here is a child of God. The Father loves the child, not because the child is this or that, or anything but just His child. He says to you, "Go save my child for me." And you say, "How, my Father?" And He says, "By Me." And you say, "Yes, I see," and go and take the Father's love and press it on that child of His, just as you find him. You do not ask him how he feels about it, any more than you ask the wood how it feels about the fire which you bring to it. You know that the fire and the wood belong together. You are sure that if the fire gets at the wood, the wood will burn, and by and by, look! the wood is burning. The wood turns to fire because the fire gave itself to the wood. The wood loves the fire because the fire first loved it.

It is the way in which one man gives himself to another man; and shall God be more cautious and prudent in His gift? If you want your fellow-man to trust you, you must trust him first. With frank, free cordialness you give yourself to him and he responds. All stingy caution and reserve defeats itself. The same trust, only infinitely greater, is in the Cross of Christ. It does

not always at once succeed. As in the Parable, God says, "They will reverence my Son," and this man or that gives Him not reverence but scorn; but nevertheless it is that trust of God in man that saves the world. God trusts Himself to man, and countless souls in answer trust themselves to God.

Sometimes the great world and the human life which it contains grow wonderfully simple. Its mixed confusion disappears. Its one or two great certainties stand out to view. It all seems for one bright moment to come just to this, — if there is a God, everything is right, if there is no God, everything is wrong. And there is a God. There is a God. Therefore all is right at the bottom and in the end. Into the world all full of God comes man, and God is there before him. He finds God there. God takes him as he comes. Sometimes he talks as if he made God, and could make God over again to be what he would. But God made him. And it is to the God who made him that he comes. "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things." All is well!

And now I wonder whether in some of your minds there does not come a question regarding all this that I have said. "After all," you may ask yourself, "what does it matter? If the end is gained, if God and man come together, what matter is it from which side the first impulse came, — whether God went out to seek man, or man with daring spiritual impulse rose up and went and clamored at the gates of God?" But must it not make a difference? Is there a situation or a fact or a condition anywhere which is absolute and identical,

and does not vary with the character of him who occupies it? And one of the strongest elements in making the character of him who occupies a situation is the way by which he came there. It is not enough that a man stands upon the mountain-top. I must know the path by which he climbed. It is not enough that a man walks in the dark valley. I must know what brought him there. The man is more than the situation. The situation means little without the soul of the man giving it its meaning.

When then I see man reconciled to God and walking with his Lord in the white garment of a new life, it makes vast difference what is the spirit of that reconciled, regenerated man. If it is the first fact of his new existence — that which he never loses for a moment — that the impulse of it came from God; that God sought him; that before he ever thought of the higher life, its halls were made ready for him, and its Lord came forth into the wilderness to find him and to bring him in, — then the strength of a profound humility is always with him. The paralysis of pride does not creep over him. Into his feebleness, through the openness of his humility, there is always pouring the power of God. It is not so much he that stands upon the mountain or walks in the valley, but the God who brought him there stands or walks there in him; and it is God's work that is being done, God's life that is being lived. He is full of the humility which exalts and strengthens.

Besides this, the appeal of the new life to the soul which lives it is largely bound up with the truth of the priority of God. To know that long before I cared for

Him, He cared for me; that while I wandered up and down in carelessness, perhaps while I was plunging deep in flagrant sin, God's eye was never off me for a moment, He was always watching for the instant when His hand might touch me and His voice might speak to me, — there is nothing which can appeal to a man like that. The man is stone whom that does not appeal to. When, touched by the knowledge of that untiring love, a man gives himself at last to God, every act of loving service which he does aftewards is fired and colored by the power of gratitude, surprised gratitude, out of which it springs. How shall he overtake this love which has so much the start of him? This is what makes his service eager and enthusiastic. It is a "reasonable service," justified by the sublime reason of the soul which loves its God because He first loved it.

Again this truth, that God is first, gives me the right to keep a strong and lively hope for all my fellow-men. It gives me also the chance to believe that I can help them. It is all hopeless if I have to stir them from their lethargy and force them over distant hill and dale to find a distant God who will not care about them till He sees them coming. But, behold! God is here. He is infinitely nearer to them than I can come. Perhaps they are loving and serving Him already in ways which are so thoroughly their own ways that I cannot recognize them. I have only to tell them over and over again how near He is; I have only to beg them to open their eyes and see!

Sometimes in our faithlessness it seems to us as if we had to do very much more than that. It seems as if

we had to go and find God, and bid Him love this child of His. It seems as if we had to remake God's child into such a being as God could love! We almost act as if we must introduce God and this man to one another! Ah, let the veil drop from your eyes! See how it really is! God loved this man before you dreamed of loving him. God loves him deeper than you imagine. What can you do, what need you do, but hold your life in such a way, and make it such a life, that besides the direct radiance of God's love, which is pouring on him all the time, some indirect testimony may be borne by you, that so this brother man may a little more speedily and clearly see the love of God?

Have I talked to-day too generally of the priority of God? Then make it absolutely special and concrete. There is some duty which God has made ready for you to do to-morrow; nay, to-day! He has built it like a house for you to occupy. You have not to build it. He has built it, and He will lead you up to its door and set you with your feet upon its threshold. Will you go in and occupy it? Will you do the duty which He has made ready? Perhaps it is the great comprehensive duty of the consecration of yourself to Him. Perhaps it is some special task. Whatever it is, may He who anticipated your love by His own in giving you the task, now help you to fulfil His love with yours by doing it. Amen.

IV.

IDENTITY AND VARIETY.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. — 1 Cor. xv. 41.

These words are part of Saint Paul's great argument for immortality. His reasoning has caught fire. It has become far more than a mere piece of logic, although it has not lost its logical consistency. Before him as he reasons there has opened up the splendor of the thing he pleads for; as he talks of heaven he has been caught up into heaven, and sees the glory of the everlasting life.

The way in which he comes to the particular words which are my text is this, — he has been claiming man's resurrection on the strength of Christ's. Christ has risen and entered into glory. Man too, because he is one in human nature with Christ, must also rise. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." But then the great misgiving came, Can man's life undergo a change like that and yet be truly his? Must he not be another being if he enters on such a different condition? If he remains the same being, must he not ever repeat the same experiences which are bound up with his very nature?

Are real identity and such variety compatible with one another?

Paul sets himself to answer those questions. First comes his beautiful parable of the seed and the plant. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed its own body." The vital principle is too spiritual to be confined to one form. It passes from one form into another which is wholly different, and yet it remains essentially the same. The buried seed and the wheat waving in the sunshine are the same, and yet how different they are! Then he passes to a yet more brilliant illustration. There is a power of life which pervades the universe. Everywhere it is identical; everywhere it is glorious. It shines in everything. By it sun, moon, and stars are clothed with radiance. But how different is the splendor which it gives to each! It fills each with itself; and lo, the result! "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory," — the same life keeping itself the same through every change, yet changing so completely. Shall not then this human life, still keeping itself the same human life, be able to go up to heaven and stand in the light of God? That is Paul's argument.

It is not so much the way in which his argument bears upon human immortality that I wish to speak about to-day, — though to that we will return at last, —

it is rather this whole idea of identity and variety coexisting and ministering to each other, and of the interest and beauty which that idea gives to the world. But notice first of all how Saint Paul builds his argument for immortality upon the richness and the splendor of this mortal life. Because this world is so great and beautiful, therefore there must be another greater and still more beautiful. Often enough have men made heaven a compensation for the woes of earth. Often enough have men said, "Because this world is so full of wretchedness, therefore there must be another world, where the starved soul shall be fed, and the wounded soul healed, and the frozen soul warmed." Paul makes heaven not a compensation, but a development. Because this world is so glorious, therefore the glory of heaven must be surpassing and unspeakable. How much nobler is Paul's way! How much fuller of inspiration and of genuine faith!

One sign of how much greater Paul's way is, lies in the higher life which it will make for one who uses and believes in it. For he who finds in the manifold glories of this mortal life a symbol and witness of the glories which belong to immortality will always be led to live this life as intensely and profoundly as he can, in order that the higher life may become real and attractive to him. Men have thought that they must separate themselves from earth in order that they might believe in heaven. Paul's doctrine says emphatically, "No!" He says, "The deeper that you go in life, the more life must spread itself out around you and become eternity. He who gets to the centre feels the sphere. Live

lightly, superficially, and formally, think little, make little of life, and it will be little to you. Think much, make much of life, and it will assert its greatness and prophesy its continuance." Indeed his doctrine seems to teach almost this: that immortality is not a truth to be directly striven for and proved, but a truth which will open itself to and fold itself around the man who deeply reaches the meaning of this life, — the man who realizes in living how identity and variety blend and unite to make the richness and solemnity of existence.

Identity and variety; identity and difference. Do we not feel even as we say the words together how they express together the tone and feeling which our thought of life demands? Identity sounds solid and substantial; it means the steady, continuous, unchanged quality of things; it almost suggests monotony; it is dimly haunted with misgivings and fears of dulness. On the other hand variety is vital. It quivers with the constant expectation of change; it is full of the interest of novelty; it sparkles and rustles, and is sensitive and open to all influences. If it has a danger, it is not dulness but restlessness; not heaviness but lightness is what it has to dread. But join the two; quicken identity with variety; steady variety with identity; make the man always himself, yet let him always feel the power of new conditions opening around him, — and then have you not made the best and happiest life? You have preserved at once responsibility and hope; you have gained both stability and movement; your man is at once a rock to build on and a wind of living inspiration.

Think of the men whom you know best and who have been most to your life, and I am sure that you will find in them these qualities in highest union. They have been the men who, you were sure, always were themselves, and yet men who have felt the largeness and richness of life, and so who have made changes ever from condition to condition. In the union of these two qualities lay their helpfulness and strength.

But let us trace a little more largely how this union of identity and difference pervades the universe, and how wherever it appears it gives richness and depth.

I wish I knew enough of the great world of physical Nature to realize how true it must be there, in the region to which Saint Paul's image first transports the mind. The most ignorant observer, the merest lounger by the rivers or among the mountains, can catch sight of it, — the genuine reality of Nature as one true existence, and yet the manifold variety with which the whole earth teems, in which Nature embodies herself. The lark and the lily, the sunbeam and the flashing river, the mountain and the ocean and the man, — it takes but the most elementary sensitiveness to feel the oneness of them all; while still our eyes and ears and all our senses are tingling with the tidings of their difference which they are always sending. I stand in awe and wonder when I think how delightful and impressive this must grow to a great naturalist, as year after year he learns more of Nature's countless differences; and yet year by year, the more he knows her differences, she — the one Nature, the single being, great and gracious — issues from her vast variety, and shows

herself to him. It must be a life full of fascination, — the eternal, undivided glory never losing its divine unity, ever unfolding itself into "one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars."

Pause here a moment as we pass, to think how when Saint Paul wants to depict the vast variety of which the world is full, it was distinctly as a variety of glory that he conceived of it. Enough he knew of the variety of woe. Easily enough he might have depicted how man, the same man still, was tossed from suffering to suffering and remained the same identical miserable sufferer in all. It would have been the same truth taught upon its darker side. But Paul knew that the true side on which to teach it was its side of light. The real variety of life is a variety of glories. Such a choice of the side from which to draw his illustration is a noble characteristic of Saint Paul. It is a sign of how healthy he is. Change from glory into glory, — that was what life seemed to him. Remember, it is no rapturous and untired boy who is talking; it is a man all sore with sorrow, beaten and broken with disappointment and distress. Is it not a sign of what a true Christian he was that life seemed to him still to be only a variety and constant interchange of glories?

But turn from physical Nature and think of the history of man. How true it is that history cannot be rightly understood unless it is illumined by this double truth of the identity and difference of life. The ages come and go, each stamped with its own character. There are the ages of war, and the ages of peace; the

centuries of thought, and the centuries of action; the times of faith, the times of philanthropy, the times of philosophy, the times of prospect and of retrospect, of certainty and of doubt, — each has its glory. In the eyes of the inhabitants of each it seems as if all other times were inglorious by the side of theirs. The truth of the difference of ages is most manifest and claims the first importance; but all the time the other truth of identity is always true, and is always making its assertion. The time is great which in the midst of its self-value is conscious always of the deeper value which belongs to the long life of man. We rejoice in the nineteenth century. We believe that there has been since Adam no century so good to live in. But greater than the nineteenth century is the sum of all the centuries, — this varied, ever-changing life of man. One long, unbroken nineteenth century from Adam all the way to us would be terrible indeed. The ages of the cloisters and the castles, of the dreams and mysteries, of the starlight and the moonlight, they are all needed in the sky of universal history; each of them, while it is thoroughly itself, may be proud and glad of all the rest.

And so with nations. We say England, France, Italy, America. What mere geographers we are unless as we say each of those names a very being stands before us, — a being with a character, a being unlike all the others, and yet bearing a true identity with them because both it and they are made of men, and have shaped all their ways and institutions out of the needs of the same old manhood living on the same old earth. The nations learn more and more how the advantage

of one is the advantage of all. Great universal tendencies are bringing them to more and more of likeness with each other. Not quite so far-away and impossible a dream appears "the parliament of man, the federation of the world." But more terrible almost than that absolute diversity and consequent hostility, would be the perfect identity of nations. The nations, like great children, match themselves with each other, compare their characteristics, call each other small or great, are filled with contempt or envy; but really it is not a question of smaller or greater, it is a question of the difference of glory. Palestine or Grece or Rome, — who shall decide, who cares to decide, their rank? "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars," and all together fill the radiant sky.

Or take another illustration, from the occupations of mankind. Three men are close together on the street. One of them makes shoes, another writes books, another is mayor of the city. It is foolish and false to say that there is no rank and precedence between the lives which those three men live. One of their lives demands higher powers and offers the opportunity of higher education than the others. It is perfectly right and wise that the shoemaker, if he feels in himself the power, should aspire to leave his shoemaker's bench and become in his turn the mayor of the city; but there are other truths besides this truth of rank and precedence. The truth that quite apart from all comparison with other arts, each of these arts has absolute standards of its own, has its own bad ways and

good ways of doing its own work, has its own high and noble way of being done; and the truth that each art, so far as it lives up to its own best standards, becomes a true utterance of universal human nature, an utterance which gets its value from the fact that it is at once identical with and different from all other utterances, — these are the real truths about men's arts and occupations which are most important. It is these truths which make the thronged streets of a great city food for thought and imagination. They clothe the vast buildings in which men do their various work with a fascination and an interest which the trees of the stateliest forest in springtime or in autumn cannot begin to match; they give dignity and pathos and meaning to our colleges and schools; they make the richness and the harmony of all active life.

And so our illustrations bring us at last to human character There, in the difference and the identity of personal human natures, is the fullest exhibition of the two truths of identity and of variety, and of their essentialness to one another. Here is the endless variety. Men are thoughtful or active, spontaneous or mechanical, conservative or radical, simple or elaborate, — where is the end of the differences which we might describe? And yet below all differences men are men The endless variations are all wrought upon one single mighty strain. Think of the dreadful loss if either of these truths should fail. If the variety fails, mankind is a great, dreary, indistinguishable monotony. If the identity fails, mankind is a great tumult of confused and unharmonious particles which have no kinship

with, no lesson for, each other. How unreligious, how unchristian either of those conditions is any one knows who has entered at all deeply into the truth of Christ and into the spirit of the Incarnation. Christ is at once the inspiration of the individual and also the assertion — such as the world has never heard before — of the identity of man. He is the Revealer of the Fatherhood of God, we say. Think what that means. He builds mankind into a family; and where as in a family is every life distinct and yet are all lives one? That household of your own, — is not its beauty here, that in it every child's nature and ways and destiny are a distinct and special study, and yet that a sweet, subtle unity runs through the whole and makes it one? One blood runs in the veins, one spirit looks out of the eyes of all, — identity and difference, not in contention with each other but confederate, helping each other, make the completeness of the family life. Conceive Christ's thought of the human race; see all humanity, as he saw it, as one great family; and then there too there is the harmony of these two truths, and every man honors his individual existence, while he rejoices in the oneness of the mighty whole.

A new child is born into the world to-day, this Sunday morning. What shall you say as you stand beside his cradle? Shall not two consciousnesses fill you? Shall you not say two things: First, here is something new, original, and strange, — another apparition on the earth, another history commenced, different from any that the world has ever seen. That fills you with the fresh delight of newness. Curiosity, inspiration, exal-

tation fill your heart. But you say also, Lo, the old life-spirit once more utters itself. Lo, that which has been is once again. The tree puts forth another bud. The chain builds on another link. That fills you with the peaceful sense of permanence, and lets you feel the whole humanity and the God of humanity holding this infant life. In the union of these two emotions lies the best fitness for the wisest work that you can do in training this new immortal.

I leave the statement and illustration of our truth, and turn now in what time remains to point out very plainly what its consequences are, what sort of life and conduct it will make in him who understands it and accepts it as his law.

First of all, it will make self-respect. Here are you, seemingly insignificant, not making much of yourself, not seeming to be worthy to be made much of. Oh, if you could know two things about yourself: First, that you are a different creature from any that the world has ever seen; and second, that you are a true utterance of the same Spirit of Life out of which sprang Isaiah and Saint John. Indeed, there must come self-respect from both those truths together, wrought and kneaded into the very substance of a human nature. It is some glimpse of them which makes the school-boy idling at his desk on some inspired morning gather up his books and go to work. It is some glimmer of these in his poor dark soul that gives the slave the power to look boldly in his eye the master who is flogging him and keep his heart untamed. It is the simple certainty of these that makes it easy for the laborer who digs your ditch not to be bullied by

your arrogant wealth, but to do his task perfectly, and report it, past your arrogant patronage or fault-finding, to God. Every act has its appropriate glory, its perfect and entire way of being done. To do any act in its perfect way is a perfect act. The star is not a little sun; it is a star. It is not a fragment broken off from the great orb and shining with a broken, fragmentary lustre; it is a thing by itself. It has its own way of shining, which the sun itself cannot invade. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the star. To shine itself out boldly in the heavens is to do a new, distinct thing which makes the heavens rich.

I would that I could make this clear to some disturbed and discontented soul which is here this morning. You are a star and not a sun. God forbid that if you really are a sun and not a star any arbitrary compulsion should keep you in the star's place and shut you out of the sun's. We must labor everywhere till there is perfect freedom for every nature to know and be itself. But you do know yourself. You are a star and not a sun. Your place in life is not in the forefront of things; it is subordinate and secondary. What then? Can you learn this truth, — that if you do your work with complete faithfulness and with the most absolute perfectness with which it is capable of being done, you are making just as genuine a contribution to the substance of the universal good as is the most brillant worker whom the world contains? You are setting as true a fact here between the eternities as he. You are doing what he cannot do. It is Emerson's fable of the Mountain and the Squirrel, —

"If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut."

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the stars."

All our works, even the greatest, are so little in relation to the world's need; all our works, even the least, are so great in relation to the doer's faithfulness. There is the secret of self-respect. Oh, go take up your work and do it. Do it with cheerfulness and love. So shall you shine with a glory which is all your own, — a glory which the great heaven of universal life would be poorer for missing.

You see how inevitably respect for others is bound up with such self-respect as this. Let us turn and think of that. The absorbing character of a great enthusiasm is one of the commonest of observations. He who cares earnestly for anything is apt to care very little for other things, and is apt to wonder and be indignant that other people do not care as much as he does for the thing he cares for. How the philanthropist, all eager to set right the world's tumultuous wrongs, chafes and grows furious at the sight of the recluse or scholar sitting in his cell, raking over the ashes of history or dreaming of the sacred elementary and abstract truths! Then how that scholar, if he looks abroad, is ready to despise the bustling restlessness which is forever organizing committees and petitioning legislatures and screwing up the loosened machinery of charity! "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory," — is not that the very truth

which such despisers of their brethren need to understand? Sometimes it seems as if such narrowness were necessary, — as if it were the inevitable price which you must pay for earnestness and energy; but surely that cannot be so, surely it must be possible for men to be profoundly devoted to their own work and yet to be profoundly thankful for the work which other men are doing, — work which they could not do, and whose details and methods it is not in their natures to understand and care for. Surely I may claim my right to be glad and proud that the great singers are singing, though my ears are dull to music; and that the great sculptors are carving, even if my soul does not respond to art; and that the great statesmen are ruling, though my quiet life seems to be lived entirely outside the region of their grand ideas. They are all mine, and I am theirs.

Is this a fancy? Is it a mere blind struggle to enlarge my life, whose littleness makes it intolerable? Not if I genuinely believe in God! If I feel Him behind all existence, then there is a great identity established between all the utterances of Him throughout the length and breadth of human life. The volcanoes know each other, — Etna crying out to Vesuvius across the sea, — because of the oneness of the central fire from which they all proceed. Let me know God, the source of all that man does anywhere, and then, O poet, sing your song! O sculptor, carve your statue! O builder, build your house! O engineer, roll out your railroad on the plain! O sailor, sail your ship across the sea! They are all mine. I am glad; I am proud of them all. Is it not what Paul wrote so trium-

phantly to his disciples, — "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's"? And then that everything should reach its best, that every man should do his best in his own line, that every star should shine brightly with its own light, becomes the wish and prayer and purpose of my life. Here is the only true respect for fellow-man.

All this applies to the different conditions and degrees in which we see other men's lives to stand; but it may also be made to apply to the different conditions and degrees into which we may think of our lives as passing. You or I are this to-day; to morrow or next year we may be something quite different. To-day we are insignificant; to-morrow or next year we may be illustrious and prominent. Or just the opposite — to-day we are illustrious and prominent, to-morrow or next year we may be insignificant. How shall we look upon those possibilities of change? Is not this what we want? To see each condition as a distinct thing with its own values and meanings, and yet to feel how our human life may, still the same that it is now, spread itself out and come to larger things. This harmonizes contentment in the present with large-hearted aspiration after greater fortunes. Let the student honor his studentship. Let him live in it as in a home thoroughly honorable and worthy. Let him think of it, not as a road over which he is compelled to travel, but as a dwelling in which he has the privilege of living; but let him realize himself in it so truly that whatever else he may be capable of doing in the coming years may seem to him not hopeless while he looks forward to it, and not strange or un-

natural when it arrives. He who lives so, lives in a present peace which the large hopes of the future do not disturb, but deepen.

And so at the end as at the beginning of my sermon I touch the use which Saint Paul first made of this truth which we have taken from him for our study. To him it was a proof of immortality. He would have men live here on earth, yet conscious of their capacity of Heaven. He would have earth real, clear, definite, distinct, shining with its own color, holding us with its own grasp; and yet he would have man so conscious of his larger self that the very definiteness of what he is to-day makes real to him the greater thing that he will be in the vast world beyond.

Is not that what we want? The life of earth now, the life of heaven by and by, — each clear with its own glory! And our humanity capable of both, capable of sharp thinking, timely hard work here and now, capable also of the supernal, the transcendent splendor there when the time shall come! The glory of the star, the glory of the sun! We must not lose either in the other; we must not be so full of the hope of heaven that we cannot do our work on earth; we must not be so lost in the work of earth that we shall not be inspired by the hope of heaven. God grant us all the contentment and the hope which come to those who live in Him who covers all yesterday, to-day, and forever with Himself.

V.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF LIFE.

Let not God speak to us, lest we die. — Ex. xx. 19.

The Hebrews had come up out of Egypt, and were standing in front of Sinai. The mountain was full of fire and smoke. Thunderings and voices were bursting from its mysterious awfulness. Great trumpet-blasts came pealing through the frightened air. Everything bore witness to the presence of God. The Hebrews were appalled and frightened. We can see them cowering and trembling. They turn to Moses and beg him to stand between them and God. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."

At first it seems as if their feeling were a strange one. This is their God who is speaking to them, their God who brought them "out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage." Would it not seem as if they would be glad to have Him come to them directly, to have Him almost look on them with eyes that they could see, and make unnecessary the interposition of His servant Moses, bringing them messages from Him? Will they not feel their whole history of rescue coming to its consummation when at last they find themselves

actually in the presence of the God who has delivered them, and hear His voice?

That is the first question, but very speedily we feel how natural that is which actually did take place. The Hebrews had delighted in God's mercy. They had come singing up out of the Red Sea. They had followed the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud. They had accepted God's provision for their hunger. They had received Moses, whom God had made their leader. But now they were called on to face God Himself. In behind all the superficial aspects of their life they were called on to get at its centre and its heart. In behind the happy results, they were summoned to deal with the mysterious and mighty cause. There they recoiled. "Nay," they said, "let us go on as we are. Let life not become so terrible and solemn. We are willing to know that God is there. We are willing, we are glad, that Moses should go into His presence and bring us His messages. But we will not come in sight of Him ourselves. Life would be awful. Life would be unbearable. Let not God speak with us, lest we die!"

I want to bid you think this morning how natural and how common such a temper is. There are a few people among us who are always full of fear that life will become too trivial and petty. There are always a great many people who live in perpetual anxiety lest life shall become too awful and serious and deep and solemn. There is something in all of us which feels that fear. We are always hiding behind effects to keep out of sight of their causes, behind events to keep out of sight of their meanings, behind facts to keep out of

sight of principles, behind men to keep out of the sight of God. Because that is such poor economy; because the only real safety and happiness of life comes from looking down bravely into its depths when they are opened to us, and fairly taking into account the profoundest meanings of existence; because not death but life, the fullest and completest life, comes from letting God speak to us and earnestly listening while He speaks, — for these reasons I think this verse will have something to say to us which it will be good for us to hear.

We have all known men from whom it seemed as if it would be good to lift away some of the burden of life, to make the world seem easier and less serious. Some such people perhaps we know to-day; but as we look abroad generally do we not feel sure that such people are the exceptions? The great mass of people are stunted and starved with superficialness. They never get beneath the crust and skin of the things with which they deal. They never touch the real reasons and meanings of living. They turn and hide their faces, or else run away when those profoundest things present themselves. They will not let God speak with them. So all their lives lack tone; nothing brave, enterprising, or aspiring is in them. Do you not know it well? Do you not feel it everywhere?

For we may lay it down as a first principle that he who uses superficially any power or any person which he is capable of using profoundly gets harm out of that unaccepted opportunity which he lets slip. You talk with some slight acquaintance, some man of small

capacity and little depth, about ordinary things in very ordinary fashion; and you do not suffer for it. You get all that he has to give. But you hold constant intercourse with some deep nature, some man of great thoughts and true spiritual standards, and you insist on dealing merely with the surface of him, touching him only at the most trivial points of living, and you do get harm. The unused capacity of the man — all which he might be to you, but which you are refusing to let him be — is always there, demoralizing you. If you knew that a boy would absolutely and utterly shut his nature up against the high influences of the best men, would you not think it good for him to live not with them but with men of inferior degree, in whom he should not be always rejecting possibilities which he ought to take? A dog might live with a wise man, and remaining still a dog, be all the better for the wise man's wisdom, which he never rejected because he could not accept it. But a brutish man who lived with the sage and insisted that he would be still a brute, would become all the more brutish by reason of the despised and neglected wisdom.

Now we have only to apply this principle to life and we have the philosophy and meaning of what I want to preach to you this morning. It is possible to conceive of a world which should offer the material and opportunity of nothing but superficialness, — nothing but the making of money and the eating of bread and the playing of games; and in that world a man might live superficially and get no harm. On the other hand it is possible to conceive of a man who had no capacity for anything

but superficialness and frivolity and dealing with second causes; and that man might live superficially even in this deep, rich world in which we live, and get no harm. But — here is the point — for this man with his capacities to live in this world with its opportunities and yet to live on its surface and to refuse its depths, to turn away from its problems, to reject the voice of God that speaks out of it, is a demoralizing and degrading thing. It mortifies the unused powers, and keeps the man always a traitor to his privileges and his duties.

Take one part of life and you can see it very plainly. Take the part with which we are familiar here in church. Take the religious life of man. True religion is, at its soul, spiritual sympathy with, spiritual obedience to God. But religion has its superficial aspects, — first of truth to be proved and accepted, and then, still more superficial, of forms to be practised and obeyed. Now suppose that a man setting out to be religious confines himself to these superficial regions and refuses to go further down. He learns his creed and says it. He rehearses his ceremony and practises it. The deeper voice of his religion cries to him from its unsounded depths, "Come, understand your soul! Come, through repentance enter into holiness! Come, hear the voice of God." But he draws back; he piles between himself and that importunate invitation the cushions of his dogma and his ceremony. "Let God's voice come to me deadened and softened through these," he says. "Let not God speak to me, lest I die. Speak thou to me and I will hear." So he cries to his priest, to his

sacrament, which is his Moses. Is he not harmed by that? Is it only that he loses the deeper spiritual power which he might have had? Is it not also that the fact of its being there and of his refusing to take it makes his life unreal, fills it with a suspicion of cowardice, and puts it on its guard lest at any time this ocean of spiritual life which has been shut out should burst through the barriers which exclude it and come pouring in? Suppose the opposite. Suppose the soul so summoned accepts the fulness of its life. It opens its ears and cries, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." It invites the infinite and eternal aspects of life to show themselves. Thankful to Moses for his faithful leadership, it is always pressing through him to the God for whom he speaks. Thankful to priest and church and dogma, it will always live in the truth of its direct, immediate relationship to God, and make them minister to that. What a consciousness of thoroughness and safety; what a certain, strong sense of resting on the foundation of all things is there then! There are no closed, ignored rooms of the universe out of which unexpected winds may blow, full of dismay. The sky is clear above us, though we have not soared to its farthest height. The ocean is broad before us, though we have not sailed through all its breadth.

Oh, my dear friends, do not let your religion satisfy itself with anything less than God. Insist on having your soul get at Him and hear His voice. Never, because of the mystery, the awe, perhaps the perplexity and doubt which come with the great experiences, let yourself take refuge in the superficial things of faith.

It is better to be lost on the ocean than to be tied to the shore. It is better to be overwhelmed with the greatness of hearing the awful voice of God than to become satisfied with the piping of mechanical ceremonies or the lullabies of traditional creeds. Therefore seek great experiences of the soul, and never turn your back on them when God sends them, as He surely will!

The whole world of thought is full of the same necessity and the same danger. A man sets himself to think of this world we live in. He discovers facts. He arranges facts into what he calls laws. Behind his laws he feels and owns the powers to which he gives the name of force. There he sets his feet. He will go no further. He dimly hears the depth below, of final causes, of personal purposes, roaring as the great ocean roars under the steamship which, with its clamorous machineries and its precious freight of life, goes sailing on the ocean's bosom. You say to him, "Take this into your account. Your laws are beautiful, your force is gracious and sublime. But neither is ultimate. You have not reached the end and source of things in these. Go further. Let God speak to you." Can you not hear the answer? "Nay, that perplexes all things. That throws confusion into what we have made plain and orderly and clear. Let not God speak to us, lest we die!" You think what the study of Nature might become, if, keeping every accurate and careful method of investigation of the way in which the universe is governed and arranged, it yet was always hearing, always rejoicing to hear, behind all methods and governments and machineries, the sacred movement of the personal

will and nature which is the soul of all. Whether we call such hearing science or poetry, it matters not. If we call it poetry, we are only asserting the poetic issue of all science. If we call it science, we are only declaring that poetry is not fiction but the completest truth. The two unite in religion, which when it has its full chance to do all its work shall bring poetry and science together in the presence of a recognized God, whom the student then shall not shrink from, but delight to know, and find in Him the illumination and the harmony of all his knowledge.

The same is true about all motive. How men shrink from the profoundest motives! How they will pretend that they are doing things for slight and superficial reasons when really the sources of their actions are in the most eternal principles of things, in the very being of God Himself. I stop you and ask you why you give that poor man a dollar, and you give me some account of how his poverty offends your taste, of how unpleasant it is to behold him starve. I ask you why you toil at your business day in and day out, year after year. I beg you to tell me why you devote yourself to study, and you reply with certain statements about the attractiveness of study and the way in which every extension or increase of knowledge makes the world more rich. All that is true, but it is slight. It keeps the world thin. This refusal to trace any act back more than an inch into that world of motive out of which all acts spring, this refusal especially to let acts root themselves in Him who is the one only really worthy cause why anything should be done at all, — this is what makes life grow so

thin to the feeling of men who live it; this is what makes men wonder sometimes that their brethren can find it worth while to keep on working and living, even while they themselves keep on at their life and work in the same way. This is the reason why men very often fear that the impulse of life may give out before the time comes to die, and shudder as they think how awful it will be to go on living with the object and the zest of life all dead. Such a fear never could come for a moment to the man who felt the fountain of God's infinite being behind all that the least of God's children did for love of Him.

I know very well how all this which I have undertaken to preach this morning may easily be distorted and misunderstood. It may seem to be the setting forth of a sensational and unnatural idea of life, the struggle after which will only result in a histrionic self-consciousness, a restless, discontented passion for making life seem intense and awful, when it is really commonplace and tame. "Let us be quiet and natural," men say, "and all will be well." But the truth is that to be natural is to feel the seriousness and depth of life, and that no man does come to any worthy quietness who does not find God and rest on Him and talk with Him continually. The contortions of the sensationalist must not blind us to the real truth of that which he grotesquely parodies. His blunder is not in thinking that life is earnest, but in trying to realize its earnestness by stirring up its surface into foam instead of piercing down into its depths, where all is calm. Yet even he, grotesque and dreadful as he is, seems almost

better than the imperturbably complacent soul who refuses to believe that life is serious at all.

The whole trouble comes from a wilful or a blind underestimate of man. "Let not God speak to me, lest I die," the man exclaims. Is it not almost as if the fish cried, "Cast me not into the water, lest I drown," or as if the eagle said, "Let not the sun shine on me, lest I be blind." It is man fearing his native element. He was made to talk with God. It is not death, but his true life, to come into the divine society and to take his thoughts, his standards, and his motives directly out of the hand of the eternal perfectness. Man does not know his own vitality, and so he nurses a little quiver of flame and keeps the draught away from it, when if he would only trust it and throw it bravely out into the wind, where it belongs, it would blaze into the true fire it was made to be. We find a revelation of this in all the deepest and highest moments of our lives. Have you not often been surprised by seeing how men who seemed to have no capacity for such experiences passed into a sense of divine companionship when anything disturbed their lives with supreme joy or sorrow? Once or twice, at least, in his own life, almost every one of us has found himself face to face with God, and felt how natural it was to be there. Then all interpreters and agencies of Him have passed away. He has looked in on us directly; we have looked immediately upon Him; and we have not died, — we have supremely lived. We have known that we never had so lived as then. We have been aware how natural was that direct sympathy and union and communication with God.

And often the question has come, "What possible reason is there why this should not be the habit and fixed condition of our life? Why should we ever go back from it?" And then, as we felt ourselves going back from it, we have been aware that we were growing unnatural again; we were leaving the heights, where our souls breathed their truest air, and going down into the valleys, where only long habit and an educated distrust of our own high capacity had made us feel ourselves more thoroughly at home.

And as this is the revelation of the highest moments of every life, so it is the revelation of the highest lives; especially it is the revelation of the highest of all lives, the life of Christ. Men had been saying, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die;" and here came Christ, the man, — Jesus, the man; and God spoke with Him constantly, and yet He lived with the most complete vitality. He was the livest of all living men. God spoke with Him continually. He never did a deed, He never thought a thought, that He did not carry it back with His soul before it took its final shape and get His Father's judgment on it. He lifted His eyes at any instant and talked through the open sky, and on the winds came back to Him the answer. He talked with Pilate and with Peter, with Herod and with John; and yet his talk with them was silence; it did not begin to make His life, to be His life, compared with that perpetual communion with His Father which made the fundamental consciousness as it made the unbroken habit of His life. All this is true of Jesus. You who know the rich story of the Gospels

know how absolutely it is true of Him. And the strange thing about it is that the life of which all this is true is felt at once to be the most natural, the most living life which the world has ever seen. Imagine Jesus saying those words which the Hebrews said: "Let not God speak to me, lest I die." You cannot put those words upon His lips. They will not stay there. "O God, speak to me, that I may live," — that is the prayer with which He comes out of the stifling air of the synagogue or the temple, out of the half-death of the mercenary streets, out of the foolish rivalries and quarrellings of His disciples.

And every now and then a great man or woman comes who is like Christ in this. There comes a man who naturally drinks of the fountain and eats of the essential bread of life. Where you deal with the mere borders of things he gets at their hearts; where you ask counsel of expediencies, he talks with first principles; where you say, "This will be profitable," he says, "This is right." Remember I am talking about him now only with reference to this one thing, — that when men see him they recognize at once that it is from abundance and not from defect of vitality that this man lives among the things which are divine. Is there one such man — it may be one such boy — in the store where all the rest of you are working for rivalry or avarice? Is there one who works from principle, one who works for God; and will you tell me whether you do not all count him the most genuinely living of you all?

The student of history knows very well that there are certain ages and certain races which more than other

ages seem to have got down to the fundamental facts, and to be living by the elemental and eternal forces, — ages and races which are always speaking with God. So we all feel about the Hebrews. The divine voice was always in their ears. Often they misunderstood it. Often they thought they heard it when it was only the echo of their own thoughts and wishes that they heard; but the desire to hear it, the sense that life consisted in hearing it, — that never left them. And so, too, we feel, or ought to feel, about the great Hebrew period of our own race, the Puritan century, in which everything was probed to the bottom, all delegated authorities were questioned, and earnestness everywhere insisted upon having to do immediately with God. Plenty of crude, gross, almost blasphemous developments of this insistence set themselves forth; but the fact of the insistence was and still is most impressive. It never frightened the Puritan when you bade him stand still and listen to the speech of God. His closet and his church were full of the reverberations of the awful, gracious, beautiful voice for which he listened. He made little, too little, of sacraments and priests, because God was so intensely real to him. What should he do with lenses who stood thus full in the torrent of the sunshine? And so the thing which makes the history of the Puritans so impressive is the sense that in them we come close to the great first things. We are back behind the temporary, special forms of living, on the bosom of the primitive eternal life itself.

When we turn suddenly from their time to our own time what a difference there is! At least what a

difference there is between all their time and a part of ours. For our time is not capable of being characterized as generally and absolutely as theirs. It has many elements. Certainly it has much of Puritanism. The age which has had Carlyle for its prophet, and which has fought out our war against slavery has not lost its Puritanism. But the other side of our life, how far it is from the first facts of life, from God, who is behind and below everything! When I listen to our morals finding their sufficient warrant and only recognized authority in expediency; when I behold our politics abandoning all ideal conceptions of the nation's life and talking as if it were only a great mercantile establishment, of which the best which we can ask is that it should be honestly run; when I see society conceiving no higher purpose for its activities than amusement; when I catch the tone of literature, of poetry, and of romance, abandoning large themes, studiously and deliberately giving up principles and all heroic life, and making itself the servant and record of what is most sordid and familiar, sometimes even of what is most uncomely and unclean; when I think of art grown seemingly incapable of any high endeavor; when I consider how many of our brightest men have written the word Agnostic on their banner, as if not to know anything, or to consider anything incapable of being known, were a condition to shout over and not to mourn over,— when I see all these things, and catch the spirit of the time of which these things are but the exhibitions and the symptoms, I cannot help feeling as if out of this side, at least, of our time there came something very

like the echoes of the old Hebrew cry, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die." We are afraid of getting to the roots of things, where God abides. What bulwarks have you, rich, luxurious men, built up between yourselves and the poverty in which hosts of your brethren are living? What do you know, what do you want to know, of the real life of Jesus, who was so poor, so radical, so full of the sense of everything just as it is in God? You tremble at the changes which are evidently coming. You ask yourself, How many of these first things, these fundamental things, are going to be disturbed? Are property and rank and social precedence and the relation of class to class going to be overturned? Oh, you have got to learn that these are not the first things, these are not the fundamental things! Behind these things stand justice and mercy. Behind everything stands God. He must speak to you. He will speak to you. Oh, do not try to shut out His voice. Listen to Him that you may live. Be ready for any overturnings, even of the things which have seemed to you most eternal, if by them He can come to be more the King of His own earth.

And in religion, may I not beg you to be vastly more radical and thorough? Do not avoid, but seek, the great, deep, simple things of faith. Religious people read thin, superficial books of religious sentiment, but do not meet face to face the strong, exacting, masculine pages of their Bibles. They live in the surface questions about how the Church is constituted, how it ought to be governed, what the forms of worship ought to be. They shrink from the profound and awful problems of

the soul's salvation by the Son of God and preparation for eternity. Do we not hear — strangest of all! — in religion, which means the soul's relationship to God, do we not hear there — strangest of all — the soul's frightened cry, "Let not God speak with me, lest I die"? In all your personal life, my friends, it is more thoroughness and depth that you need in order to get the peace which if you spoke the truth you would own that you so wofully lack. You are in God's world; you are God's child. Those things you cannot change; the only peace and rest and happiness for you is to accept them and rejoice in them. When God speaks to you you must not make believe to yourself that it is the wind blowing or the torrent falling from the hill. You must know that it is God. You must gather up the whole power of meeting Him. You must be thankful that life is great and not little. You must listen as if listening were your life. And then, then only, can come peace. All other sounds will be caught up into the prevailing richness of that voice of God. The lost proportions will be perfectly restored. Discord will cease; harmony will be complete.

I beg you who are young to think of what I have said to you to-day. Set the thought of life high at the beginning. Expect God to speak to you. Do not dream of turning your back on the richness and solemnity of living. Then there will come to you the happiness which came to Jesus. You, like Him, shall live, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!

VI.

THE CHOICE YOUNG MAN.

Saul, a choice young man. — 1 Sam. ix. 2.

Saul is as true a character of the Old Testament as his namesake, who is by and by called Paul, is of the New. He is full of the spirit of the morning. He is eager and incomplete. He attracts and disappoints us. He is a mixture of loyalty and disobedience. He excites great hopes, and dies in tragical failure. He makes ready the way for something better than himself. He is the true Old Testament man.

But it is not of him that I want to speak to-day. It is simply of that striking phrase in which he is described. "A choice young man," so he is called. It is the general description of a being in whom we are all interested, who is supremely interested in himself, and yet who has an element of mystery, and excites our curiosity as well as our interest. Let us ask ourselves this morning what are the characteristics of the choice young man.

The "choice" of anything signifies the best example of that thing. The word involves the idea not of exceptionalness but of representativeness. The choice fruit of the tree is the tree's best fruit; it is that in which the tree's juices have had their most unhindered

way, and made the best which that tree was capable of making. The choice work of art is the freest embodiment of the artistic spirit, the thing in which beautiful thought and beautiful work and beautiful material have done their best. The choice man is the best specimen of humanity, the human being in whom there is least that is inhuman or unhuman, and in whom the truly human qualities are most complete. In every case there is a ruling out of what is exceptional, and a fulfilling of what is essential. The choice thing is the true thing.

So is it with the choice young man. He is the true young man. He is the human creature in whom the best material of the world, which is manhood, exists in its best condition, which is youth; or if I am wrong in calling youth the best condition, at least it is a condition which has excellences and fascinations which are wholly its own. The great point of the phrase is this, — that it denotes not an exception but a true condition of human life. The choice young man is the man in whom are uttered the normal characteristics of young manhood; and so he invites our study, not as a strange phenomenon, but as a revelation in peculiarly perfect, and therefore peculiarly distinct, display of a nature with which we are familiar, and which we everywhere desire to understand.

The charm of young human life is felt everywhere, and through all special conditions which give it its variety of local color. It belongs to no nation and no age. The young Roman, the young Greek, the young Arab, the young Englishman, the young American, as well as the young Jew, excite at once the imagination

and the admiration of the world. Indeed in the freshness of life is felt the unity of life; and youth is one throughout the world and throughout history as older life never is. And it would seem to be man's pure delight in his humanity which, previous to all analysis or careful enumeration of the qualities which make it beautiful, compels from all mankind a glory and delight in the young of its own kind. "Here is pure man," he says, "unmixed, untainted. It is crude indeed, it is unfinished; but that is man, that is his glory. The finished man is not man. It is a contradiction of terms." And so before we ask ourselves what it is that is admirable about him, we admire and are inspired by the young man as we admire and are inspired by the morning and the spring-time.

When, however, we go on, as we must, to ask, beyond this general consciousness of admiration, what it is which we admire in young manhood, our answer must be found, I think, in the way in which the true human life always begins with its circumference, as it were, complete, and then fills in its space with its details. It starts with large conceptions, great desires, enthusiastic notions of what man may be, and it is the fact of these, suggested by and present in the young man's life, which makes the immediate attraction of a generous young manhood.

It might have been just the opposite. Life might have been made to begin with some one point and slowly widen out from that point until its completeness were attained. Prudently adding one well-tried conception to another, making successive unexpected

discoveries about itself, the nature might have only come by slow degrees to realize its own greatness and mysterious dignity. As it is, it leaps at once to this completeness of itself; it is exuberant at the beginning; it does not distrust the world and only gradually learn that the world is worthy of its trust; it trusts the world outright, and lets all stingy questionings come afterward. Life seems so good that it is satisfied with its own normal exercises and emotions, and does not seek additions in artificial stimulants. It bears everlasting witness that the good is deepest and most original in human life, by believing in it first, and only slowly recognizing the presence and power of the evil.

Now here is a distinct quality in human youth, belonging to a distinct truth concerning the life of man. If it is so, then we have reached our first idea about the choice young man. In him this quality of human youth will be most bright and clear. He will be most possessed with the sense of the sufficiency of life, and most eager to preserve its purity because of the completeness which he feels in it.

This is the true motive of the best young man's desire for purity. It is not fear. The wise men gather round him and say, "You must not sin. You must not be licentious; you will suffer if you do. You must restrain your passions; you will suffer if you do not." It is good for him to hear their voices; it is good for him in his weaker moments to be told how God has emphasized the good of every goodness by the penalty which he has attached to every wickedness. But alas for every young man if these fears are the safeguards

upon which his soul habitually and finally relies to keep him pure. There is nothing choice about a virtue such as that. Alas for you, young men, if there is no such conception in you of the essential sacredness of life as shall make every natural process and experience beautiful, and just in proportion shall make every unnatural action first of all an impossibility, and then, when in some baser moment it seems possible, make it a horror. This is the young man's true purity, — first, a divine unconsciousness and incapacity; and then, when that is no longer possible, a divine hate of impurity. How absolutely such a truth quarrels with all the abominable doctrines which would make us believe that a youth must wade its filthy way through the depths of iniquity up to the heights of a wasted and withered continence! Not so; life, the true life, the choice life, begins upon the mountains. As the morning mists scatter, it sees the gulfs it did not see at first; but it has no natural necessity to plunge into them when they are seen. And the true power of its continence is not the horror of the gulf, but the abundance and glory of the pure hill-top where the young feet stand.

All this does not apply only to those things which are absolutely and manifestly vicious, to wanton licentiousness and reckless sin; it applies to all the accidents of life. It is a bad sight for the eyes to see when a young man has come prematurely into the power of those accidents, when he cannot find life abundant without what we call the "comforts of life," even those which have no vicious element about them. What busi-

ness has the young vigor of twenty to demand that the fire shall be warm and the seat cushioned and the road smooth? Let him not parade his incompetence for life by insisting that life is not worth living unless a man is rich, — unless, that is, the abundance of life should be eked out with wealth, which is an accident of life, not of its essence. Let him not insult himself by behaving as if the sunshine or the shower made a difference to him. Let those poor slaveries wait till the heart is soured and the knees are weak. No! the young man's place is to scorn delights. We will tolerate any folly of exuberant vitality which vents itself in over-scorn; but the other folly is unnatural and base. Our gilded youth are not — and they ought to know that they are not; they ought to be told that they are not — choice young men when the study of their life is to spare themselves pain and surround themselves with creature comforts. It is a sign that they have not got hold of the sufficiency of life. They do not know what pure gold it is, and so they try to eke it out with gilding. Good is it when their better human nature breaks through sometimes, and in the rough life of the wilderness or the sea, sought by whatever artificial means, demands its right to rejoice in the simplicity of living, in the privations which mean the close, uncushioned contact with life. Sad is it when a community grows more and more to abound in young men who worship wealth and think they cannot live without luxury and physical comfort. The choicest of its strength is gone.

The same principle, that life in the young man should be abundant in itself, would find still broader applica-

tion in every relation of human action. It would bring simplicity and healthiness in every standard. It would rule out and cast aside as impertinent and offensive all that was artificial and untrue. How clear it makes the whole question of the way in which money is to be gained or given! And so it brings us at once to another practical question of young men's life. Money to the simple, healthy human sense is but the representative of energy and power. It is to pass from man to man only as the symbol of some exertion, some worthy outputting of strength and life. Save in the way of charity, it is not to be given or taken without something behind it which it represents. With his mind full of this simple, honest truth, feeling himself ready to earn his living and to give an equivalent for all that he receives, the young man ought to have an instinctive dislike and scorn for all transactions which would substitute feeble chance for vigorous desert, and make him either the giver or receiver of that which has not even the show of an equivalent or earning. I do not say that gambling and betting are admirable or respectable things in gray-haired men. It is not of them or to them that I am speaking now. I do say that in young men, with the abundance of life within them and around them, gambling and betting, if they be not the result of merest thoughtlessness, are signs of a premature demoralization which hardly any other vice can show. In social life, in club, in college, on the street, the willingness of young men to give or to receive money on the mere turn of chance is a token of the decay of manliness and self-respect which is more alarming than almost any

thing besides. It has an inherent baseness about it which not to feel shows a base soul. To carry in your pocket money which has become yours by no use of your manly powers, which has ceased to be another man's by no willing acceptance on his part of its equivalent, — that is a degrading thing. Will it not burn the purse in which you hold it? Will it not blight the luxury for which you spend it? Will you dare to buy the gift of true love with it? Will you offer it in charity? Will you pay it out for the support of your innocent children? Will it not be a Judas-treasure, which you must not put into the treasury, because it is the price of blood?

So I rank high among the signs of a choice human youth the clearness of sight and the healthiness of soul which make a man refuse to have anything to do with the transference of property by chance, which make him hate and despise betting and gambling under their most approved and fashionable and accepted forms. Plentiful as those vices are among us, they still in some degree have the grace to recognize their own disgracefulness by the way in which they conceal themselves. Some sort of hiding and disguise they take instinctively. Let even that help to open our eyes to what they really are. To keep clear of concealment, to keep clear of the need of concealment, to do nothing which he might not do out on the middle of Boston Common at noonday, — I cannot say how more and more that seems to me to be the glory of a young man's life. It is an awful hour when the first necessity of hiding anything comes. The whole life is different thenceforth. When

there are questions to be feared and eyes to be avoided and subjects which must not be touched, then the bloom of life is gone. Put off that day as long as possible. Put it off forever if you can. And as you will hold no truth for which you cannot give a reason, so let yourself be possessed of no dollar whose history you do not dare to tell.

It is no drawback from the truth or power of all this that it involves the appeal to sentiment, for (and this is the next thing I want to say) the presence and the power of healthy sentiment is another token of the choice young humanity. Sentiment is the finest essence of the human life. It is, like all the finest things, the easiest to spoil. It bears testimony of itself that it is finer than judgment, because a thousand times when judgment is all clear and right, sentiment is tainted and all wrong. And hosts of men, feeling the mysterious dangers which beset sentiment, would fain banish it altogether. They do not know how to use it, and so they will not try. It is explosive and dangerous, and so it shall be watched and made contraband, like dynamite. How many men do you know who can frankly look you in the face and say a piece of sentiment, and make it seem perfectly real and true, and not make either you or themselves, or both, feel silly and embarrassed by their saying it? Now if men must come to that, the longer it can be before they come to it the better! Let the sentiments have their true, unquestioned power in the young man's life. Let him glow with admiration, let him burn with indignation, let him believe with intensity, let him trust unquestioningly, let him sympa-

thize with all his soul. The hard young man is the most terrible of all. To have a skin at twenty that does not tingle with indignation at the sight of wrong and quiver with pity at the sight of pain is monstrous. Do you remember in "The Light of Asia" how the young Prince Siddartha caught his first sight of human suffering?

> "Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
> Glowed with the burning passion of a love
> Unspeakable, the ardor of a hope
> Boundless, insatiate, 'O suffering world,
> O known and unknown of my common flesh,
> Caught in this common net of death and woe
> And life, which binds to both! I see, I feel
> The vastness of the agony of earth,
> The vainness of its joys, the mockery
> Of all its best, the anguish of its worst!'"

Do you remember the simpler, nobler story of the young Christ? "When He came near He beheld the city, and wept over it." Tell me what becomes of the hard young man, proud of his unsensitiveness, even pretending to be more unsensitive than he is, incapable of enthusiasm, incapable of tears; what becomes of him beside the knightliness of a sorrow such as that? The little child is sensitive without a thought of effort. The old man often feels the joy and pain of men as if the long years had made it his own. But in between, the young man is hardened by self-absorption; when all the time he ought — with his imagination, with his power to realize things he has not been nor seen — to go responsive through the world, answering quickly to every touch, knowing the burdened man's burden just

because of the unpressed lightness of his own shoulders, feeling the sick man's pain all the more because his own flesh never knew an ache, buoyant through all with his unconquerable hope, overcoming the world with his exuberant faith, and farthest from sentimentality by the abundance and freedom of the sentiment which fills him. Be sure that there is no true escape from softness in making yourself hard. It is like freezing your arm to keep it from decay. Only by filling it with blood and giving it the true flexibility of health, so only is it to be preserved from the corruption which you fear. Be not afraid of sentiment, but only of untruth. Trust your sentiments, and so be a man.

It would be strange indeed if our first truth did not apply to the whole methods of thought as well as to the actions and the feelings. That truth was, you remember, that youth began with the large circumference, and then filled in the circle gradually with the details of living. It does not start with the small detail and only gradually build out to the large idea. Now, what will that truth mean as we apply it to the intellectual life? Will it not mean that, the choicer a young mind is, the more immediately it will begin with the perception of great truths, which then its thought and study and experience will fill out and confirm? It is the place and privilege of the young man to know immediately that God is good, that the world is hopeful, that spirit is real. These great ideas are his ideas. He does not prove God's existence, building it up out of his own sight of the things God does. He sees God. He, the pure in heart, sees God; and then all his life is occupied in gathering

into the substance of the faith which he has won by direct vision, the vividness and definiteness which separate successive experiences of God have to give.

Until we know this method of the young man's knowledge we shall always be going astray, as I doubt not we are going astray now. We shall discredit every intuitive perception of the fresh nature, and demand of it to go without faith till, we may almost say, the time has come when the gaining of faith is possible no longer. We shall meet the spontaneous utterance of a belief in the spiritual world with a cold, "How do you know?" which, failing to elicit what we call a reasonable answer, will kill the newly born belief and bury it in an early grave of scepticism. But bid the young man believe that which his heart tells him is true, enlarging the testimony of his own heart by the witness of the universal human heart through a docile deference for authority; and then adjure, implore him to be pure and righteous, — for the light cannot come except through purity and righteousness; lust and iniquity are surely darkness — do this, and then you may be sure of — what? Not that your young man will not make a thousand blunders, not that he will not sometimes seem to lose his sight of truth, but that the method of his mental life is right, and so that in the end he must stand clear under a cloudless sky.

The world's strength has been built up thus, by young men believing and uttering the truth they saw, — the greatest, largest truth, — and then their experience filling that truth with solidity, until it became a foundation on which yet greater truth might rest.

Begin with largeness of thought, and with positiveness of thought. The way in which a man begins to think influences all his thinking to the end of his life. Begin by seeking for what is true, not for what is false, in the thought and belief which you find about you. Be as critical as you will, search as severely as you want to into the belief which offers itself for your acceptance, but let your search and criticism always have for its purpose that you may find what you may believe, not that you may find what you need not believe. Some things which your first thinking accepts, your riper thought may feel compelled to lay aside; but the habit of believing once established will not be lost out of your life, and the young man's time is the time to make that habit. Scepticism is not merely the disbelief of some propositions. If it were that, there is not one of us but would be a sceptic. It is the habit and the preference of disbelieving. God save us all from that scepticism! God save especially our young men from it, for a sceptical young man is a monstrosity.

What shall we say about this whole last matter, the matter of belief, except that the true young man's life, the choice young man's life, is bound to be a life of vision. To see the large things in their largeness, — that is his privilege; and there is no privilege which is not a duty too. It is God's word to Abraham, "Look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them. So shall thy seed be." "And Abraham believed the Lord and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Afterwards came the long journeys and the struggles and the darknesses and the disap-

pointment and the sins; at the last came the quiet rest in the cave of Machpelah which is before Mamre, where they buried him; but the vision of the stars never faded from his eyes.

And now I do not know whether there has come at all out of what I have said anything like a clear image of the choice young man. As I said when I began, I should care little to try to create that image if it were some strange, exceptional creature that I was trying to carve. But it is not that; it is the true young human being, the type and flower of the first vigor of humanity. And these are the qualities which we have seen in him, — purity of body, mind, and soul; simple integrity, and a dignity which will not have what is not his, no matter under what specious form of game or wager it has come into his hands; tenderness, sympathy, sentiment, — call it what name you will, a soul that is not cynical or cruel; and positive, broad thought and conviction. Do these things, as I name them, blend with one another? Does there stand out as their result a figure recognizable and clear, well-knit and strong, brave, generous, and true, but very little conscious of itself, claiming the love and honor of the human heart?

For men do love the type and flower of their own young manhood. Little children and young boys look up to it with touching reverence. Old men look back to it with wistful longing, often with a perplexed wonder how they ever passed themselves through a land which they see now to be so rich and kept so little of its richness. Men love and honor it; and their love and honor for the choice young man is only measured

by the disappointment and anger and disgust with which they look at the young libertine, the young gambler, the young cynic, the young sceptic, the young fool.

If all these qualities do really blend into a recognizable character and being, then there ought to be some fact, the fine resultant of them all, in which they should all take expression, and which should represent them before the world. As the resultant of all the qualities of a star is its brightness, and the resultant of all the qualities of a flower is its fragrance, and the resultant of all the qualities of an action is its glory, — so the resultant of the purity and integrity and tenderness and thoughtfulness of a young human life ought to be its joy. I cannot count that a separate quality, far less a separate action; it is the radiance, it is the aroma of all the qualities. The depressions of youth are very real, as real and as likely to appear as are the clouds which gather at the rising of the sun. But the sun and not the cloud is the characteristic fact of the morning; and joy, not sadness, is the characteristic fact of young humanity. To know this, to keep it as the truth to which the soul constantly returns, — that is the young man's salvation. Whatever young depression there is, there must be no young despair. In the morning, at least, it must seem a fine thing to live.

Only once in this sermon have I spoken of Jesus as the specimen of human youth. But He is such a specimen always. And I appeal to all of you who have sympathetically read the Gospels to say whether you do not feel through all His life of sorrow the subtle, certain presence of this joy of which I speak. It breaks

out into flame upon the mountain summits of His life; but, where there is no flame, it nestles into warmth in all His ordinary intercourse with men, and it glows with a fervor of consolation which is unmistakable beneath the darkest blackness of His suffering. It is the ideal joy of life, burning through all the hardest and cruellest circumstances of life, and asserting, in spite of everything, the true condition of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Let this conduct me naturally to the last word I want to say in order to make all that I have said complete. I have spoken of the young man's character and life, and I have seemed to say nothing at all of his religion. Is it because I have forgotten his religion or thought it of small consequence? God forbid! It is because one of the most effectual and convincing ways to reach religion is to make life seem so noble and exacting that it shall itself seem to demand religion with the great cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" When not yet driven by the stress of sin and sorrow, but exalted by the revelation of what life might be, and eager with the witness of the truth of that revelation which fills his own self-consciousness, the young man looks abroad for help that he may realize it, then he finds Christ. And he finds Christ in the way that belongs to him just then and there, just in the time and place where he is standing. He finds Christ the model and the master. It is the personal Christ that makes the young man's religion. "Behold this being, young Himself with the eternal youth, knowing this life which I am just beginning, with the true share in it which made His Incar-

nation, living now in the heavens and also here by my side, with these dimly felt purposes of life which are in me all perfectly clear and bright and glorious in Him, — behold this Christ standing before me, pointing to the heights of the completed human life, and saying not, 'Go there,' but saying, 'Follow me,' — going before us into the land our souls desire!"

When religion comes to mean simply following Christ, when the young man gives himself to Christ as his Leader and his Lord, when he prays to Christ with the entire sense that he is laying hold of the perfect strength for the perfect work, — then the whole circle is complete. Power and purpose, purpose and power, both are there; and only the eternal growth is needed for the infinite result.

It is always sad not to feel the choiceness of anything which has in it wonderful and fine capacities, — to be content with the ordinariness and coarseness of that which is capable of being exquisite and great. Oh, that there could thrill through the being of our young men some electrical sense that they are God's sons, that so they might make themselves the servants of His Christ, and live the life and attain the nature which are rightly theirs. God grant it for the young men who are here to-day!

VII.

BACKGROUNDS AND FOREGROUNDS.

For lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, — the Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name. — Amos iv. 13.

The mountains to the Hebrew were always full of mystery and awe. They stood around the sunlit level of his daily life robed in deep clouds, the home of wandering winds, flowing down with waters, trembling, as it seemed, with the awful footsteps of God.

They made indeed for him the background of all life, as they make the background of every landscape in which they stand. Close to the eye that watches them there are the shrubs and grass; the river murmurs at our feet; the common works of life go on. And then beyond, holding it all in their strong grasp, setting their solid forms against the sky, sending their streams down into the open plain, stand the great hills, which keep the sight from wandering indefinitely into space and throw out in relief all the details of the broad scenery. The foreground of the plain-land rests upon the background of the hills. From them it gains its lights and shadows. The two depend on one another. Take the background away and the foreground which

is left is tame and thin, and leads to nothing. Take the foreground away, and the background, with nothing to lead up to it, is misty and unreal. The man who lives and works in the foreground does not think all the time about the background; but it is always there, and he is always unconsciously aware of it. The background and foreground together make the complete landscape in the midst of which a human life is set.

Now all this is true not merely in the world of outer Nature, but also in the world of inner life. There is a foreground and a background to every man's career. There are the things that press themselves immediately upon our attention, — the details of life, the works our hands are doing, the daily thoughts our minds are thinking, the ground and grass on which we tread. Those are the foreground of our living. And then, beyond them, there are the great truths which we believe, the broad and general consecrations of our life which we have made, the large objects of our desire, the great hopes and impulses which keep us at our work. Those are the mountain backgrounds of our life. When we lift our eyes from the immediate task or pleasure, our eyes rest on them. They are our reservoirs of power; out of them come down our streams of strength. Once more the background and the foreground together make the perfect picture. You cannot leave out the foreground of immediate detail. You cannot leave out the background of established principle and truth. Both must be there, and then the picture is complete.

The danger of our life is not ordinarily lest the fore-

ground be forgotten or ignored. Only a dreamer here and there, wrapt in his distant vision, forgets the pressing duties and the tempting pleasures which offer themselves directly to our eyes and hands. They crowd too closely on us. The detail of life at once commands us and attracts us. The danger with most of us is not lest it should be neglected or forgotten. It is the backgrounds of life that we are likely to forget. The mountains sink out of our sight. The highest sources of power do not send us their supply. Shall we discard the figure for a moment and say that to most men the actual immediate circumstances of life are so pressing that they forget the everlasting truths and forces by which those circumstances must be made dignified and strong? Then must come something like the cry of Amos the Prophet, "Lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His Thought, that maketh the morning darkness and treadeth upon the high places of the earth." Is there not in these words, dimly but very grandly and majestically set forth, the great suggestion of the divine background of all life? It is the same which Tennyson has pictured in the Vision of Sin:—

> "At last I heard a voice upon the slope
> Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope?'
> To which an answer pealed from that high land,
> But in a tongue no man could understand;
> And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
> God made Himself an awful rose of Dawn."

And now, if I have made my meaning plain, you understand what I intend when I say that I want to

make my subject for this morning The Backgrounds of Life. We are troubled — whoever looks carefully at his fellow-men is troubled — by the superficialness and immediateness of living. There is a need of distance and of depth. And the distance and depth are there if men would only feel them. Let us try to see what and where they are.

I speak especially to those who are young, whose life is just beginning, for it is in youth that the landscape of a life most easily constructs itself in its completeness. Then, in youth, the immediate thoughts and occupations are intensely vivid; and at the same time the great surrounding truths and principles have a reality which they often lose in later life. Sometimes, much later, as the man grows old, the great surrounding truths and principles gather once more into sight. The old man feels again the distance, which the middle life forgot. But with him by that time the immediate interest has grown dull. The present occupations are not pressing and vivid. The beauty, the glory of young life, of the best and healthiest of young life, is that while it is intensely busy with the present it is also aware of and inspired by those larger truths, those everlasting timeless verities out of which all true life must be fed. Youth has the power of realism and idealism most perfectly combined. Its landscape is most harmoniously complete; therefore it is to healthy youth, to life with all its promise opening before it, that one speaks with the surest hope of being understood as he discourses on the backgrounds of life.

I shall be most likely to make myself intelligible if I

speak not too generally, but describe to you several of the special ways in which the greater and more lasting stands behind the less and temporary and holds it in its grasp.

Consider first, then, how behind every foreground of action lies the background of character on which the action rests and from which it gets its life and meaning. It matters not whether it be an age, a nation, a church, a man; anything which is capable both of being and of acting must feel its being behind its acting, must make its acting the expression of its being or its existence is very unsatisfactory and thin. What does it mean to me that the French Revolution burst out in fury a hundred years ago, unless in that outburst I see the utterance of the whole character of that crushed, wronged, exasperated time which had gathered into itself the suppressed fury of centuries of selfish despotism? What is it to me that a great reformer arises and sets some old wrong right, unless I see that his coming and the work he does are not mere happy accidents, but the expression of great necessities of human life and of a condition which mankind has reached by slow development and education? What is your brave act without a brave nature behind it? What is your smile unless I know that you are kind? What is your indignant blow unless your heart is on fire? What is all your activity without you? How instantly the impression of a character creates itself, springs into shape behind a deed. A man cannot sell you goods across a counter, or drive you a mile in his carriage on the road, or take your ticket in the cars, or hold the door open to let you pass,

without your getting, if you are sensitive, some idea of what sort of man he is, and seeing his deed colored with the complexion of his character.

If this were not so, life would grow very tame and dull. We cannot picture to ourselves how tame and dull it would become. An engine has no background of character. Its deeds are simple deeds. Unless you feel behind it the nature of the man who made it, its actions are complete and final things and suggest and reveal nothing beyond themselves; therefore its monotonous clank and beat grows wearisome. Its very admirable orderliness destroys its interest. You weary of it. Nobody can make an engine the hero of his novel; for man, being character, will care for nothing which has not character behind it, finding expression through its life.

Here is the value of reality, of sincerity. Reality, sincerity, is nothing but the true relation between action and character. Expressed artistically, it is the harmony between the foreground and the background of a life. We have all seen pictures where the background and the foreground were not in harmony with one another; each might be good in itself but the two did not belong together. Nature never would have joined them to each other, and so they did not hold to one another but seemed to spring apart. The hills did not embrace the plain, but flung it away from them; the plain did not rest upon the hills, but recoiled from their embrace. They were a violence to one another. Who does not know human lives of which precisely the same thing is true? The deeds are well enough and the character is

well enough, but they do not belong together. The one does not express the other. The man is by nature quiet, earnest, serious, sedate. If he simply expressed his calm and faithful life in calm and faithful deeds, all would be well; but, behold! he tries to be restless, radical, impatient, vehement, and how his meaningless commotion tries us. The man's nature is prosaic and direct, but he makes his actions complicated and romantic. It is the man's nature to believe, and only listen to the scepticism which he chatters! It is the discord of background and foreground, of character and action.

On the other hand, when the two are not in discord but in harmony, every one feels the beauty of the picture which they make. The act which simply utters the thought which is the man, what satisfaction it gives you! The satisfaction is so natural and instinctive that men are ready enough to think, at least, that they prefer a bad man who without reserve, without disguise, expresses his badness in bad deeds, to another bad man who with a futile shame tries to pretend in his activities that he is good. "Let us have sincerity at least," they say. They are not always right. The good deed which the bad man tries to do may be a poor blind clutching at a principle which he does not understand but dimly feels, — the principle of the reaction of the deed upon the character; that principle and its working we must not lose sight of in our study. The heart gives life to the arm. The arm declares the life of the heart; but the heart also gets life from the arm. Its vigorous exertion makes the central furnace of the body

to burn more brightly. So the good action may have some sort of power over the character of which at first it expresses not the actual condition but only the shames, the standards, and the hopes.

What will be the rule of life which such a description of life as this must necessarily involve? Will it not include both the watchfulness over character and the watchfulness over action, either of which alone is wofully imperfect? We are familiar enough with a certain lofty talk which seems to make small account of action. "To be rather than to do; not what you do but what you are; be brave and true and generous," — so some idealists seem to talk. And on the other hand there are hard-headed practical people who have no eyes for anything but action. "Do your duty and do not worry about the condition of your soul; your deed, not you, is what the world desires; get done your stroke of work and die, and the world will take up the issue of your life and use it and never ask what sort of man it was from whom the issue came, — to do and not to be, that you must make your motto."

Oh, the inveterate partialness of man! Oh, his persistent inability to take in the two sides of any truth, the two hemispheres of any globe! "This ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone" — sometimes it seems as if that were the most continually needed word of Christ. When will men learn that, above all, to feed the fountain of character and yet never to neglect the guiding of the streams of action which flow out of that fountain, — that that in its completeness is the law of life. All the perplexing ques-

tions about the contemplative and active life, about faith and practice, about self-discipline and service of our fellow-men have their key and solution hidden somewhere within this truth of the background and the foreground — the background of character and the foreground of action — without both of which together the picture cannot be complete.

Do we ask ourselves what culture there is by which the human life can be at once trained into character and at the same time kept true in active duty? I reply that there is only one culture conceivable by which it may perfectly be done, — that is the culture of personal loyalty, the culture of admiration for a nature and obedience to a will opening together into a resemblance to Him whom we ardently desire and enthusiastically obey.

I recall what Jesus said, "You must be born again," — that is His inexorable demand for the background of character. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," — that is His absolute insistence on the foreground of action. And the power of both of them — the power by which they both unite into one life — lies in the personal love and service of Himself.

This is the largest and richest education of a human nature, — not an instruction, not a commandment, but a Friend. It is not God's truth, it is not God's law, — it is God that is the salvation of the world. It is not Christianity, it is not the Christian religion. it is Christ who has done for us, who is doing for us every day, that which our souls require. What has He done for you, my friend? First, He has made you a

new creature in Himself. He has given you a new character; and then He has guided you and ruled you, making you do new, good, holy actions in obedience to Him. Not two blessings, not two salvations, — only one! This is His promise to the soul which He invites, "Come, give yourself to me and you shall be new and do new things; you shall have opened within you the fulness of new admirations, new judgments, new standards, new thoughts, — everything which makes new character; and there shall be new power for the daily task, new clearness, new skill in the things which every day brings to be done." The background and the foreground! "This ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone," — the full harmonious picture of a life!

Closely related to the background of character, and yet distinguishable from it, is what I may call the background of the greater purpose. It is like travelling on a long journey. You set out with a clear intention of going to some distant place where there is work waiting for you to do. You keep that intention all the way; it governs the direction of your travel; it keeps you moving on and will not let you wander, and will not let you rest; it gives dignity and meaning to every mile. But under and within that intention lie the numberless details, the interesting circumstances of your journey, the people whom you meet, the landscape which you see, the conversations which you hold, the waking and the sleeping, the idleness and occupation of your days. Often and often you forget the greater purpose of your travel in your absorption in its inci-

dents, and yet that greater purpose is always lying behind the incidents and holding them in their place. If it should vanish, they would become instantly insignificant and frivolous. That is exactly the way in which a man's purpose in life lies behind and gives dignity and meaning to everything that the man does or says. He is not always thinking of it. The ambitious lawyer is not always consciously determining to conquer at the bar. The eager scholar is not every moment consciously hungering for knowledge. The avaricious merchant is not always consciously struggling to be rich. The unselfish philanthropist does sometimes cease consciously to labor for his fellowman. But each of them has always the greater purpose of his life unabandoned, unextinguished, resting behind the lightest and most unprofessional action that he does, and making it different because it is he — this man with this purpose — that does it. No wave that plays most lightly on the beach which does not feel the great solemn ocean with the mysterious heaving of its tide behind.

The greater purpose may be bad or good, horrible or splendid. One man's greater purpose is an undying passion for revenge. Another man's greater purpose is a perpetual desire for the glory of God. Which ever it is, it dominates the life. No word that the man speaks but is reverberated from that background; no act he does that is not shone through by its color. It is what makes two lives which outwardly are just the same, essentially and manifestly different. It is the life. The other, the outward exhibition, is the living.

In the larger experience of men, in what we call history, the same truth is true; the same landscape, the same combination of background and foreground, builds itself. Behind the immediate activity of any people rises what we call the public spirit, by which we mean the general thought or idea or purpose of living which the whole people has conceived. Behind the things which a time is doing there grows up the *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the time. The countless actions of a State, its laws, its wars, its administrations of justice, its shaping of its institutions, — all go on within the influence of its idea of its own destiny, the thought of why it exists in the world and what its existence means. Poor is the life that is not in sympathy with its time and with its nation. It fastens itself into no complete picture. It is a spot of discord which the harmony of the whole is always trying to cast out and throw away.

In the smaller world, it is a man's profession which makes the most palpable background of his life. If the choice of it has sprung, as it ought to spring, intuitively and almost unconsciously out of the slowly developed dispositions and capacities of a man's nature, it then enfolds itself warmly about all he thinks and does. It is as the merchant, the lawyer, the artist that he does everything. Every most broadly human act — the way in which he walks the streets, the way in which he serves his family, the way in which he reasons about abstract truth — has in it the marks and tokens of the chosen occupation of his life. Thereby they all gather consistency. They are saved from being scattered fragments. The life does not drift, but

moves from recognized purpose to assured result, carrying each drop onward in its current.

If this were the only truth it would seem to make life very stiff and rigid; it would hold every act in the slavery of the pre-established purpose. But here again the power of a re-active influence comes in. The foreground tells upon the background, as well as the background on the foreground. The settled purpose, the profession, the dedication of the life is not a fixed and uniform thing. Nothing is fixed and uniform. Everything is played upon and beaten through and through by personal nature. No two buglers blow their bugles, no two prisoners rattle their hoarse chains alike. Therefore the great purpose is ruled by the man, as well as the man by the great purpose, and it is the complicated result of the mutual ruling that makes the life. It is the background and foreground telling on each other, that make the picture.

And let us notice this, that both the great purpose of a life and its immediate activities are provided with their safeguards that they may not be lost. The great purpose has its impressiveness and its solemnity. The immediate activities have their absorbing present interest. So strong is this last that the great purpose often ceases to be conscious; yet let us not think that this makes it cease to be powerful. I forget to think about the thing I have resolved to be; I am not pondering upon the dignity of the law or the sacredness of the ministry the livelong day; I am busy, I am delighted with the detail of life which my career involves, but none the less I am in the power of the idea with which

I undertook it, I am sensible in an instant to any impulse which turns me out of its course, and I am ready to claim the triumph when the gates of success open before me at the end.

Once more we ask ourselves, as we asked before, What kind of life will the presence of this background, the background of great purposes, involve? And our answer is, once more, that it involves a double life, — a life of practical alertness and a life of profound consecration, a life intensely conscious of the present temporary forms of duty and a life also deeply conscious of the unchangeable, eternal, ever-identical substance of duty. Men lose the first, and they become vague dreamers; men lose the second, and they become clattering machines; men keep them both, and they are sons of God, living in their Father's house, filled with its unchanging spirit, and yet faithful and happy in its ever-changing tasks.

We ask ourselves, How shall a life like that be won? And again we must answer as we answered before, By personal allegiance. No other power is large enough and flexible enough at once to make it. Loving obedience, loving obedience is the only atmosphere in which the vision of the general purpose and the faithfulness in special work grow in their true proportion and relation to each other. The distant hills with the glory on their summits, and the close meadow where the grass waits for the scythe, — they meet completely in the broad kingdom of a loved and obeyed Lord. And who is Lord but Christ? And where but in the soul of him who finds in Christ the worthy revealer of the life's pur-

pose and the sufficient master of every deed shall the great ideals of life and the petty details of life come harmoniously together? Obey Him, love Him, and nothing is too great, nothing is too little; for love knows no struggle of great or little. No impulse is too splendid for the simplest task; no task is too simple for the most splendid impulse.

I hasten to say a word or two upon another of the backgrounds of life, which every earnest heart will recognize the moment it is pointed out. I mean the background of prayer. Every true prayer has its background and its foreground. The foreground of prayer is the intense, immediate desire for a certain blessing which seems to be absolutely necessary for the soul to have; the background of prayer is the quiet, earnest desire that the will of God, whatever it may be, should be done. What a picture is the perfect prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane! In front, burns the strong desire to escape death and to live; but, behind, there stands, calm and strong, the craving of the whole life for the doing of the will of God. In front, the man's eagerness for life; behind, "He that formeth the mountains and createth the winds and declareth unto man His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth." In front, the teeming plain; behind, the solemn hills. I can see the picture of the prayer with absolute clearness. Leave out the foreground — let there be no expression of the wish of Him who prays — and there is left a pure submission which is almost fatalism. Leave out the background — let there be no acceptance of the will of God — and the prayer is only an expression

of self-will, a petulant claiming of the uncorrected choice of Him who prays. Only when the two, foreground and background, are there together, — the special desire resting on the universal submission, the universal submission opening into the special desire, — only then is the picture perfect and the prayer complete!

What Christ's prayer was all prayers may be, all true prayers must be. What is it that you ask for when you kneel and pray? Directly, no doubt, it is some special mercy. It is the coming in of your ship; it is the recovery of your friend; it is the opportunity of usefulness which you desire for yourself. But do you want any of those things if God does not see that it is best that you should have them? Would they not fade out of your desire if you should know that they were not His will? Do you not wish them because it seems to you that they must be best, and therefore must be His will? Is it not, then, His will which is your real, your fundamental, your essential prayer? You must keep that essential prayer very clear or the special prayer becomes wilful and trivial. You must pray with the great prayer in sight. You must feel the mountains above you while you work upon your little garden. Little by little your special wishes and the eternal will of God will grow into harmony with one another, — the background will draw the foreground to itself. Foreground and background at last will blend in perfect harmony. All conflict will die away and the great spiritual landscape from horizon to horizon be but one. That is the prayer of eternity — the prayer of heaven — to which we may come, no one can say how near, on earth.

I must not multiply my series of suggestions. I hope you see that they are mere suggestions and instances of that which pervades all life. All life has this construction of the foreground and the background. Everywhere there must be the background on which the foreground rests; everywhere the foreground grows thin and false if the background is destroyed or ignored. The love for truth behind the belief in the special creed, the sense of duty behind the conviction that this particular thing must be done, the joy in life behind the enjoyment of this single pleasure, all human history behind the present age, the whole man's culture behind the training of one particular power, the good of all behind the good of each, — all these are instances among a hundred others of the backgrounds of life, and bear witness of how the construction of life is everywhere the same.

Wherever the background is lost, the foreground grows false and thin. What is this foolish realism in our literature but the loss of the background of the ideal, without which every real is base and sordid? In how many bright books there is no God treading on the high places of the earth; nay, there are no high places of the earth for God to tread upon. What is the practical man's contempt for theory? What is the modern man's contempt for history? What is the ethical man's contempt for religion? All of them are the denials of the background of life. All of them therefore are thin and weak.

Again I say that it is only in personal love and loyalty that life completes itself. Only when man loves and

enthusiastically obeys God, does the background of the universal and the eternal rise around the special and temporary, and the scenery of life become complete.

Therefore it is that Christ, who brings God to us and brings us to God, is the great background-builder. You give yourself to Him, and oh, the wondrous widening, the wondrous deepening of life! Behind the present opens eternity; behind the thing to do opens the thing to be; behind selfishness opens sacrifice; behind duty opens love; behind every bondage and limitation opens the glorious liberty of the child of God. So may we give ourselves to Him, and life become complete for all of us!

VIII.

THE SILENCE OF CHRIST.

But He answered her not a word. — MATT. xv. 23.

WE often think about the different tones which may belong to the same words. We do not think so often about the different way in which silences may be understood. A man speaks to me, and I say to myself, "What does he mean by what he says?" Not merely "What do his words mean?" but "What does he mean?" But a man stands silent in my presence, and there too I must ask, before I understand it perfectly, "What does he mean by this silence? Why does he stand there and not speak?" For silence has as various moods as speech, and its moods are far more subtle. One man sits silent in my room while I am at my work, and his speechless presence fills the room with sympathetic influence and an atmosphere in which my work almost does itself. Another man the next day sits silent in the same chair, and his silence weighs like lead upon my brain and hand, and work is hopeless. And so with the same man at different times. I walk with my friend to-day, and he does not say a word, and my soul all the time is saying to itself, "Oh, if he would only break out and upbraid me; no condemnation could be half as awful as this dreadful silence." I walk with

the same friend to-morrow, and am almost afraid to have him speak because it seems as if no sympathy could be so entire, no inflow of his richness into me could be so perfect as this in which our lives silently are almost mingling into one. So silence is as various as speech. Silence is what the silent man is. There is the silence of vacancy and dulness, and the silence of the thought for which the thinker cannot find sufficient words. There is the silence of crafty concealment, and the silence which is completer revelation than any speech could be. There is the silence of utter condemnation, and the silence which is sweeter than any spoken praise. The completest joy and the profoundest sorrow, both are silent. It is as different in men as it is in Nature. There is the silence of sunrise, all tremulous with hope, and the silence of sunset, wrapped in the stillness of its memories. There is the stillness of the snake slipping unseen through the grass, the silence of the cattle feeding on the hillside, the silence of the war-horse waiting for the signal of the battle. How different they are from one another, yet all alike are silent.

I turn this afternoon to the record of one of the silences of Him whose silences must have been most significant because of the richness of His nature and the deep importance of all His relations to mankind. One day a Canaanitish woman came running after Jesus with the cry, "O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil!" We hear the sharp agony pierce the keen, trembling air. The poor woman's whole soul is in her words. She cries to Him in whom alone seems any chance of help; then,

almost frightened with her cry, she pauses. The thing is done. Her heart has told its story. The face of Christ has touched and stirred her misery into self-consciousness, and out of the cloud this lightning of her cry has flashed. The thing is done, and she waits tremblingly for the result. Can we not almost hear her heart beat as she listens? What will He say? And then see what does happen. "He answered her not a word." Bowed down before Him there, waiting to hear whether He was blaming her or blessing her, think of the dismay with which her soul must have been filled as slowly the moments passed by and she became aware that He was doing neither. The sense of His silence standing over her, how bewildering, how terrible, how worse than any blame it must have been! But, behold! I think that I can see her slowly lift her eyes. She cannot bear this suspense. She must look this awful silence in the face. Her eyes find out the face of Christ, and then she feels Him behind, within, His silence. She knows Him not clearly but certainly. He is there, and she has found Him. The disciples come and upbraid her, but she does not stir. She will know what this silence means before she goes. She knows that it means something gracious; and so she listens and listens till at last the silence is broken and she hears Him say, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Then she goes away satisfied, and finds her daughter whole.

This story, then, suggests a study which must very often have forced itself on every devout and earnest soul. What is the meaning of the silences of God?

How shall I understand it when I pray to Him and He answers me not a word, when my whole life cries out to Him and there comes no reply? Such silences there are beyond all doubt,—times when the sense of need is overwhelming; when the soul, bowed down with its burden, comes staggering up to the door and finds it closed, and no knocking of the desperate and bleeding hands brings any answer. The connection seems to be broken. The sympathy seems to be lost. There, in the great depth and distance which seemed but yesterday to be full of God as the sky is full of sunlight, now there is no God at all,—nothing but emptiness and blackness. Oh, it is terrible! Better even the curse of God — so sometimes the soul thinks; better anything which should show that He was there, and that He was aware of me, than this blank silence. Oh, that He would say something!

But then the question always keeps coming up, May it not be that He is saying something which I cannot hear? There is at the bottom of every soul such a true sense of its own incapacity that it does not go very far into the question of 'why God does not speak, before it begins to wonder whether it is ready and quick and spiritual enough to hear Him if He did. There are two kinds or grounds of silence. There is the silence of the empty, speechless ocean or prairie, and there is the silence which envelops the deaf man who stands in the very central roar of London. Which is this silence of God? It may be either; nay, it may be both. Both elements may be in it. And so our study of God's silences divides itself into two parts: First, there are

the silences which are apparent, and then there are the silences which are real. We cannot always draw the line between them, and say of any special silence to which class it belongs, but we know that both kinds exist; and he does not fully understand the fact that often his life seems to have lost its communication with the life of God who has not asked the meaning both of the apparent and the real silences which refuse his soul an answer.

Let us speak, then, first of God's apparent silences, — of the times when He really answers us but does not seem to. That such times would be, I think that I should know beforehand if I thought in general of the greatness of God and the littleness of man. There is nothing in that contrast that should make the great refuse to hear the little. The great would become little if that were the effect. Your beast looks up appealingly into your face. The vast difference between his beasthood and your manhood does not make you disregard his mute appeal, — you would be almost a brute yourself if that were so, — but it does make him in large degree unable to understand how his appeal touches you. Perhaps he catches some glimpse of sympathy upon your face, perhaps he is aware of some tone in your voice; but all your thoughtfulness, all your care and plan to help him, of that he knows nothing.

The resemblance does not tell the story, for we are far more to God than the beast is to us. We are of the same nature as God. We are God's children. Take, then, your child. He asks you for some blessing. It seems to him an easy thing, something which you can

almost take up in your hand and give him; but you know that it is something far more complicated. It is something which you must scheme and plan for, something which can only be given from life to life and not from hand to hand. When, then, your brow knits with thought as to how you may give the gift, may it not well be that he thinks you have refused him? Is it not evident that he must have your mind, and see with your eyes, before he can know what is the giving of the gift, and so can know that it is given?

So that we might be sure beforehand that there would be times when God would seem to refuse what He was actually at the very moment giving. But look at it in another way. Think of the unconscious wants in us which are forever laying themselves before God: needs which we do not know ourselves enough to apprehend, far less to understand; deficiencies whose worst defect is that they are not aware of their own falling short; poverties which count themselves riches; sin which calls itself goodness; shame which imagines itself glory, — all of these go with a pathetic urgency into God's presence and plead for a supply which is all the more needed because the needy soul itself to which they belong is not aware of want! God answers all these prayers. He gives to each unconscious need all the supply which, in its unconsciousness, it is able to receive; but the soul, ignorant of the need, cannot know the answer which its needs are getting. It does not dream what God is doing for it. Blessing comes into it, and it is wholly unaware. But may it not be — will it not almost certainly be — that, in large part by means

of the unrecognized but real supply, the sense of need will be awakened, and will recognize itself in the presence of the supply which it has received? So it is that children come only gradually to know their father's and their mother's care. They are cared for before they are aware that they cannot care for themselves. The helplessness by and by reveals itself. Then they cry out; and only in their crying out do they attain the knowledge of how their helplessness has been already enfolded in protecting love. In the soul's history there is the same period of wakening, — when, conscious of need but not yet conscious of supply, the spirit cries out for a God who long before it knew its own want has been supplying that want with Himself. I think my prayer unanswered when really God not merely is answering it, but has been answering it for years, before ever it knew enough of itself to be prayed.

One other thought must still be added: God is the Lord of all the world; whatever goes on in the world goes on under His care. It would be awful if that fact made God careless of any, the least or feeblest of His children; awful if all these thronging prayers, pouring in from Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the sea, had it in their power to hinder or silence the feeblest fluttering petition which tried to find its way to God from any weakest child of His who after long hesitation and doubt has dared to pray. It is not that. But is it not easy to conceive that such a multitude of need may, likely enough, have influence upon the way in which that single petitioner's prayer receives its answer, upon the form the answer shall

assume? If I prayed all alone, — my prayer the only prayer which pierced the darkness because mine was the only soul which stood in need, — then I can possibly imagine that as I stood and looked I should behold the answer come like a white dove out of the distance until it laid itself upon my soul and gave it peace. But now I cannot help seeing what a far greater richness there will be if my petition blends with a million others, and the answer comes in some great outpouring of the divine light and love which addresses itself to all the world. It seems to me almost like this: You write your letter to your friend, and straightway there comes back his reply. Thin, narrow, limited, a transaction purely between you and him, getting part of its value from its specialness and limitation, is your correspondence. But suppose your letter is one of a thousand which reaches this great helpful friend of you all; and suppose that by some great act done out in the broad face of the sun, or by some mighty book which speaks like a trumpet from a mountain-top, he answers you all together, — you all and a host besides, — tell me, are not you answered, you whose prayer started and soared out of a special closet on a certain day? Will you say almost peevishly, "Nay, but I wanted my own answer all to myself"? Is not that selfish and weak? May not the very richness of this larger answer have it for one of its purposes to rebuke that selfishness and let you know that he best finds God and is God's who finds Him and becomes His, not in separation from his brethren but in the certainty of God's love to all and of the belonging of all souls to God?

I must not follow farther these suggestions of the seeming silences of God. I never think of them without thinking how great is the delight which comes when any man discovers that God really has been answering him all the time when he thought that his prayers were all unheard. That must be one of the most exquisite joys of heaven. Among the vials which in the Book of Revelations held the prayers of saints, there must be some which, when the saints who prayed them find them in their vision-time, shine with a brilliancy supremely precious. They are the prayers which seemed as if they were not answered, but which really did bring down their blessing. When we do really see them and know their history, two things will become very real to us about all prayer: First, that not the gift but the giver is the real answer to prayer; not to get God's benefactions, but to get God, is the soul's true answer. And second, that the faith which comes by the assurance that God must have answered is often a nobler culture of the soul than even the delightful thrill of the heard answer as it enters into our ears, or the warm pressure of the blessing itself, held tight in our tremulous and grateful hand. May both of these assurances come to all of us when we pray to God, and yet it seems as if He sent us no reply. Often those days of bewilderment and disappointment are the birthdays of faith.

But now that we may reach the second part of our topic, shall we not come back to the poor woman who stands before the silent Saviour in that unknown spot in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon? It was no apparent silence which she had to confront. The blessed lips

were really closed; the blessed hands really did not move with any gesture of bestowal. "He answered her not a word," — that is the story which His servant tells.

And is there anything like that in the experience of Jesus which comes to souls to-day? Indeed there is! Many and many a prayer there is which not merely Christ does not seem to answer, — which Christ does not answer. Let us think of such prayers a while. Let us see to what classes they belong, and what ought to be the teaching of their lack of answer to our souls.

Some prayers Christ does not answer, we may say, because they ask Him to do our work for us. They ask Him to do what we ought to do for ourselves. Tell me, is there a kinder thing that you can do for your pupil who comes up to you with his slate, asking you to work out for him his problem, than to bid him go back to his seat and do his task himself, and get that discipline and learning which is really the object of his having his task set to him at all, — the object of his being in the school? You ask Christ to show you with a flash of lightning what your sorrow means. You ask him to decide for you and to reveal to you by some supernatural illumination which path of life you ought to take, which friendship you shall cultivate, what profession you can most successfully pursue. There comes no answer to those prayers. The Christ to whom you pray answers you not a word. And why? Those are your problems. It is by hard work of yours, by watchful vigilance, by careful weighing of consideration against consideration, that you must settle those things for

yourself. Still, if you are wise and devout, you will not fail to say, "God showed me it!" when you have really found out the answer by the use of your own powers; for where did those powers get their enlightenment except from Him? But the first prompt, definite answer which your prayer expected never comes. It is withheld because the same God who is ready to do His work for you demands that you should do your own.

Closely united with this, and coming also very near to the story of the poor woman, there is the truth that Christ does not answer many a petition because the petitioner is not able to appropriate and understand the answer. Very often, as I said before, the sense of need becomes developed in advance of the ability to take in the supply. You see a group of people enjoying intensely some great work of art. You cannot see its beauty; but as you hear them talk there wakens in you some dim sense that it is beautiful, and that for you not to see its beauty is in you a sad defect and loss. You speak to them and say, "Explain to me this beauty and make me feel it." They look into your face, and answer you not a word. They see that it is hopeless. You need so much before this need can be supplied. They cannot answer this prayer till many another has been prayed and answered. Is not the same thing true of Christ? Some youth upon the street in Jerusalem meets Him as He walks among the disciples and, seeing the intelligence and peace and joy which fills their faces, appeals to the Master and says, "Lord do for me what thou hast done for them," and then expects the fulness of the blessing instantly. It does not come.

And why? He is not ready. It cannot come. He must be John or Peter before the Lord can do John's or Peter's work in him. And so the Lord looks him in the face, and answers him not a word.

One other cause there is for silence when we pray, and that is the largeness of God's kingdom. I have spoken of it already, but here it comes in again. Two friends come to me together, one of them wants me to go with him for a pleasant walk; the other wants me to come and rescue his child from some most imminent and dreadful danger. I do not hesitate a moment. I turn away from him who wants me to walk with him and hurry off to save, if it is possible, the child's imperilled life. And if he be the man he ought to be, my walking friend will thank me for denying his request, would have no respect for me if out of foolish fondness I let the poor child die in order that I might get with him the freshness of the autumn breeze or the glory of the mountain view. He will recognize my greater responsibility. He will see my larger kingdom. Now God is not limited exactly thus. He is above all time, and so has all time for His own. He has time enough for all His children; but there may be other kinds of complications. In many ways it may be impossible that what I ask should be done without the sacrifice of something else which is of far more importance concerning some special brother's life, or concerning the vast world at large. What then? Shall I not rejoice in my unanswered prayer? Shall I not be thoroughly glad that my petition goes to One who will leave it unanswered if there are greater things which the answer-

ing of it would hinder, or if in my blindness I have asked something which for myself would be not good but evil? Who is there that would dare to pray at all if he had not that assurance? Who has not felt sometimes as if the face of Christ was never so gracious or won from us such perfect trust as when He simply looked on us in silence and answered not a word.

Thus we detail a few of those conditions in which God does not answer prayer. They are but specimens and instances. There are a great many others. And now, as I stand and look abroad across them all, they all give me one great impression. That impression is, that none of them are necessarily condemned to act as discouragements of the soul which prays and whose prayer goes unanswered. I think that that is very strange. Go back to our poor Canaanitish woman once again. Look at her! See what she does when Jesus gives her no reply! Does she turn off in despair? Does she go away in anger? Does she say, "He is not for me," and leave Him to His Hebrew followers? Not so! In the sweet melody of the old verses we can feel her pressing more closely to Him through the silence which He has drawn about Him like a veil. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord help me.'" And she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Behold her undiscouraged faith! Nay, is it not much more than that? Not merely she clings to Him in spite of His silence. Do we not feel that somehow it is His very silence through which as through a rich revealing glass she looks in on His nature, and sees

what is truly He? At any rate all the story lets us see clearly how the result is that she is led on to Him. Behind His gifts, which were what she first came seeking, she is led in to Him.

My friends, do we know anything of that experience? Do we know anything of what it is to take refuge from Christ's silence in Christ Himself? If we do not, there are great depths of our religion still waiting for our souls to sound. You cry, "O Lord, solve me this problem!" and the solution does not come. "What! must I walk in darkness?" your poor soul cries out; and then He comes and takes your hand and says, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life." In place of the answer to your prayer comes He to whom you prayed. You have not got the solution of your problem; it still floats in doubt. You have not got the sure prophecy of the future; it is hid behind the wavering and trembling veil. You have not got the brother's dear presence for whose life you cried and wrestled; he is walking beside the river of Life in the new Light of Heaven. You have not got what you prayed for, but you have got God! You have the source, the fountain, the sun! You have taken hold of the essential meaning and essence of all these things for which you prayed, in taking hold of Him to whom you prayed. In His silence you have pressed back to Him. If He had spoken, you might have rested in His words. Now you have pressed back to Him. Not in the word He speaks but in the word He is, you have found your reply.

It is in the silences of Nature that we are often sensi-

ble of being most near to Nature's heart. Not when the thunder is roaring, nor when the winds are sighing, but in some hour of the morning or the evening when even the distant song of a bird seems an intrusion, when the silence of Nature grows a transparent veil which reveals and does not hide her loveliness, — then is the time when you know how lovely Nature is! It is in the silence of a great city; not in the noisy clashing noontide of its furious business, but in the solemn midnight when the hush is over all its streets, — then it is that the heart of the city opens to you, and you feel to the full its mystery and awe and delight. And is it not true about the men whom you have known best that the times when you have sat or walked side by side with them in silence, have often been the times when you have known them most deeply and most truly?

Is it strange that the same thing should be true of Christ? If my brethren, who are my equals, have each some sacred chamber in his nature which only silence and not speech can open and reveal, shall I think it strange that Christ, in the completeness of His life, should many a time meet my especial petition with silence because so, and so only, can He let me see Himself, which is the purpose of all His treatment of me. We glorify talk overmuch. We meet a man and ask him countless questions. "Where was he born? Who were his father and mother? Where was he educated? What does he believe?" And so we try to know him. He answers us the best he can. He means to keep back nothing. But when his answers are all in, and I have registered them in my book, and analyzed them,

and arranged them, do I know the man? And then in some crisis or emergency, or on some sunny day which is like hundreds of others in his life, I just sit in his presence, and he says nothing to me, and the result is that I get up and go away at evening full of the knowledge of what manner of man he is.

"Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground as though He heard them not." So Christ revealed Himself to the furious Jews who were howling for the life of the poor woman whom they had caught in her sin. When Pilate said to him, "Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? Jesus answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." So the Prisoner revealed Himself to His amazed and frightened judge. By silence often of necessity and not by speech He must make Himself known, because the revelation is too great for words to contain; because the hearer cannot hold the truth and yet, by his strange human capacity, can hold Him who speaks the truth, Him who is the truth; because words sometimes hide instead of revealing what they try to tell, — for all these reasons the Lord often when we pray to Him answers us not a word.

Oh, my friends, our answered prayers are precious to us; I sometimes think our unanswered prayers are more precious still. Those give us God's blessings; these, if we will, may lead us to God. Do not let any moment of your life fail of God's light. Be sure that whether He speaks or is silent, He is always loving you, and always trying to make your life more rich and good and happy. Only be sure that you are always ready!

IX.

HOW TO ABOUND.

I know how to abound. — PHIL. iv. 12.

SAINT PAUL is rejoicing in a double knowledge. "I know both how to be abased and how to abound," he says. The experience of want and the experience of abundance, both of them he understands, and he is ready to meet either of them. It is of the second of his two kinds of knowledge that I want to speak to you to-day; but the two are not distinctly separable from one another. No man can have one kind of knowledge and be wholly destitute of the other. Just as no man knows how to rule who is not able also to obey; and no man knows how to obey without being also ready to command, — so the man who is truly wise in poverty would be wise also in wealth; and he who is most truly fit for wealth would not fail if poverty should come upon him. Thus each condition becomes in some sort a test of the other. There is one great philosophy which covers both. Let us try to remember this as we think this morning about knowing how to be rich. "I know how to abound," says Paul.

It often seems as if men had more than enough instruction as to how they ought to meet adversity, but far too little as to how to meet prosperity. As if that were

so easy! As if success could take care of itself! Nor does the prosperous and affluent man know his own need! A hundred poor men come and say, "Show me what all this means. Tell me how shall I live in poverty and not grow wretched, sour, cruel, hopeless." Hardly one comes to God or fellowman, and with his hands overrunning with good things cries, "O help me to escape my dangers! Show me how to abound!" Our Litany, indeed, does make men think. "In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity, good Lord deliver us," it bids us pray. As those words fall upon his ear, the rich, abundant man must sometimes look up almost in surprise, and see the dangers of his lot in life staring at him through the silken curtains; but at most times the curtains hang ample and smooth and quiet, and no fear disturbs them. "Hard enough to get rich," men will say, "but very easy to be rich. Tell me how to win prosperity, and I will not ask anybody to tell me how to use it."

And perhaps it is just because affluence does not seem to bristle with dangers as poverty does, that it seems often to many people to be an inferior, almost an unjustifiable condition for a noble man. It seems to afford no chance of moral heroism. It looks sleek and self-satisfied. The sweet moral uses of adversity monopolize our thought. To throw away wealth and profusion, to turn ascetic, to disparage learning, to isolate one's life from the pleasant association of family and friends,— we all know how this has seemed to many men, to many noble men, to many groups and generations of men not destitute of lofty aspirations, to be the first

condition of high spiritual character, — the making of life bare and meagre. It is a strange confusion. The idea seems to be that a man ought to throw away wealth and luxury because they make life too easy. Really it is throwing away wealth and luxury because they make life hard, because in them the chance of deep and spiritual life is beset by many mysterious and subtle dangers, over the conquest of which alone can man go forward to his best. Surely there is a braver, a franker, and a nobler way. Surely the man who takes his wealth or privilege and keeps it and learns how to live in it and use it and conquer its dangers by continual watchfulness and care, — surely he has done work more worthy of respect than any monk or ascetic in the cell or cave to which his coward life has fled.

You will not think of me that I stand here as a Christian minister before a congregation in which there are many people who are rich, simply trying to feed their self-complacency, to congratulate them upon their lot. I am not so mean as that. If there are men and women here whose lives are full of privilege, it is not my place to bid them throw their privilege away; it is not my place to tell them that their privilege is wrong; but my duty surely is to remind them of the dangers and responsibilities which privilege involves, and to exhort them as earnestly as I can to think and pray and study that they may "know how to abound."

The phrase is very simple. Behind the duty of being anything, lies the deeper duty of knowing how to be that thing in the best way and to the best result. I meet a man who says, "My fellow-citizens have chosen me

to such and such an office." His face is all aglow with triumph. He has won the victory. He has carried the election. How quickly the question starts up in my mind — "Does this man know how to govern? He is going to sail the ship of State. Does he know anything about such navigation? Woe to the State if he does not!" "Woe to thee, O Land, when thy king is a child," says the wise preacher. Another man is proud that he is a father; but he has evidently not got hold of the first ideas of fatherhood, of its sacredness and seriousness and far outreach. There are officers in every great army who have the commission but have not the knowledge, and they are the officers whose men are sacrificed in reckless ventures. The priest is made by ordination, but the knowledge how to be a priest comes only by prayer and study and the grace of God. No man has a right to be anything unless he is conscious that he knows how to be it. Not with a perfect knowledge, for that can come only by the active exercise of being the thing itself, but at least no man has a right to be anything unless he carries already in his heart such a sense of the magnitude and the capacity of his occupation as makes him teachable by experience for all that his occupation has to make known to him.

How the strict application of our rule would depopulate our industries and professions! How it would bid the king come down off of his throne, and the judge off of his bench! How many fathers and mothers it would depose from their sacred seat at the head of the family! How it would beckon many a priest out of his pulpit, many an author from his desk, many a teacher from his

school-room, many a merchant from his counting-house, many a mechanic from his bench! Every man who is satisfied with being anything, and is not trying to know how to be that thing as well as it is possible to be it, this law would summon to resign and leave his place for larger, more earnest, more conscientious men! This is the law which Paul suggests with regard to abundance. Wealth is a condition, a vocation, he declares. A man may have the condition and not have, not even seek to have, the knowledge of how to live in that condition. Go to, ye rich men, and learn how a rich man ought to live.

I talk of wealth as if it were synonymous with Paul's word "abundance;" but no doubt the word as he uses it means much more than what we generally understand by wealth. He is thinking of any plentiful supply of life, of anything which makes life sumptuous and ample. Plenty of learning, so that the mind is nowhere starved; plenty of friends, so that the affections are all satisfied; plenty of peace and spiritual comfort and certain faith and enthusiastic inspirations, — all of these may be included in his great word, "to abound." Not only to the man of money, but to the man of scholarship, to the popular man, to the man of great spiritual hopes and enjoyments, — to all of them his words suggest that there is something more needed than to have these great possessions, even to know how to have them, to be worthy of them, to be able to get the real heart and substance of their value out of having them.

He did not certainly have all these things himself, but one of the subtlest and profoundest suggestions

which his words contain is this, that as a man may have the things and yet lack the knowledge how to use them, so on the other hand, a man may lack the things and yet possess the knowledge of them, — the knowledge of their nature and their use. Paul, a poor man, nevertheless says, "I have the best part of money still, — the knowledge of what money is, and what a true man ought to do with money." Some secret he possessed by which he unlocked the heart of wealth, even although his lot in life was almost abject poverty. That is a very lofty mastery indeed.

And now is it possible for us to put our finger upon this mysterious knowledge of Saint Paul, and say exactly what it was? I think we can. It must have been a Christian knowledge. He is speaking, as he always speaks, distinctly as a Christian. Remember he became a Christian not later probably than thirty-five years after the birth of Christ. He wrote this epistle to the Phillippians as late as the sixty-fifth year of the Christian Era. It was then after thirty years of Christian life that he professed this knowledge. Thirty years had passed since he first saw his Master, Jesus, on the road to Damascus. Thirty years of consecration, thirty years of ever-deepening communion with his Lord, thirty years of the profoundest consciousness of his own soul. If we sum up those thirty years in one great phrase what shall we say of them but this, — that Paul had learned in them the true perfection of a human soul in serving Christ. All knowledge for him had become summed up in that, — the true perfection of a human soul in serving Christ!

And now imagine that to his meagre life there had been brought the sudden prospect of abundance. "To-morrow, Paul, a new world is to be opened to you. You shall be rich; you shall have hosts of friends; your struggles shall be over; you shall live in peace. Are you ready for this new life? Can your feet walk strong and sure and steady in this new land so different from any land where they have ever walked before?" What will Paul's answer be? "Yes, I have Christ, I know my soul in Him. I am His servant. Nothing can make me leave Him. With the power of that consecration I can rob abundance of its dangers and make it the servant of Him and of my soul. I shall not be its slave; it shall be mine. I will walk at liberty because I keep His commandments." So in the words which David had spoken long ago might Paul reply. The power by which he could confidently expect to rob abundance of its dangers and to call out all its help was the knowledge of the true perfection of a human soul in serving Christ.

Let us turn quickly from Saint Paul to ourselves. Let us take one by one the different kinds of abundance of which we spoke, and see how it is true that over each of them a man would win the mastery who carried into it the secret of Saint Paul, — the knowledge of the true perfection of a human soul in serving Christ; how such knowledge would certainly be the power he would need.

Take then, first, the simplest of all the meanings of abundance, which is wealth, — the ownership of riches. Do all rich men know how to be rich? He does not know how to do anything who does that thing

so that he brings it to its worst and not its best results. Is that not true? A man does not know how to sail a ship who steers it so that when it ought to go to Liverpool he brings it into Madagascar. Where is the ship of wealth then meant to sail? Her port is clear and certain, — to generosity and sympathy and fineness of nature and healthy use of powers. What shall we say then of the man whose money makes him selfish and cruel and coarse and idle, or any one of these bad things. There are many hard names which we may call him by, but the real philosophy of the whole matter, the comprehensive definition of it all is this, — he does not know how to be rich! He is a blunderer in a great art. Look at his opposite. Look at the man who takes money into the easy mastery of his character. His selfhood, which is his character, appropriates it. He makes it part of him. The richer that he grows the more generous and sympathetic and fine and active he becomes. What can you say of him but that he does know how to be rich. I say of a man that he knows how to travel when he makes each new country, as he enters it, open its secrets and render up to him new interest and knowledge. I say of a man that he does not know how to swim when the water takes possession of him and drowns him in itself. So I say that a man does not know how to be rich when his money makes him its slave, and turns him into a coarseness like itself instead of being elevated and refined by the commanding spirituality of his human soul.

There is certainly a very terrible aspect to a sight like this, — an aspect of it that makes one very angry, that

sometimes stirs up a whole class or city-full of poor men who seem to themselves to be wronged by the rich man's ignorant and stupid use of wealth, to rage and violence. There is certainly another way of looking at it in which it is most pathetic. For what can be more pitiable than the condition of a blunderer who holds in his hands the power of such happiness and good and usefulness as money gives, and knows not what to do with it? The failure may take various forms. It may deck itself with gaudy tinsel, and shine in the extravagance of gold and diamonds; or it may clothe itself in the false sackcloth of miserliness. It may affect frivolity, or affect severity. The failure is the same in either case. In either case an infinitely pathetic object is the rich man who has not known how to be rich.

And now what is the lacking knowledge? Certainly not something which any schools to which the man might have gone could possibly have taught. We not merely cannot find, we cannot picture to our imagination, any college which among its other courses should have one course which should teach men how to be rich, how to live worthily in wealth. Only the college of life could teach that fine and difficult and lofty art; and in the college of life more than in any other university everything depends upon the spirit and teachableness of the student himself. But in that college there is one lesson which every right-spirited and docile student ought to learn. It is the mystery of living, and the supremacy of some great power on which life depends, and the need of obedience to God. That lesson is the purpose for which the college of life exists.

Its professors are the solemn events which come to every man. Its text-books are the histories of men, whose leaves and chapters are the passing years. Its halls are the several businesses and relationships in which men are engaged. In that great college, sacred with the accumulations of generations of learning men, the great central lesson must be learned that humanity is not its own, but God's; and that to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever is the chief end of man. We may not say that sympathy with fellow-man and the desire to help him is the world's lesson. That is one of its subordinate sciences, one of its necessary departments, but only one. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do His commandments." That is the testimony of one of the profoundest students of this university of life, one of its most finished graduates, — David, the King of Israel, in his hundredth and eleventh Psalm. His son, King Solomon, a student of a different temper, but also no slight or superficial scholar, bore the same testimony in the same words in the first chapter of his Book of Proverbs. And what shall we say who stand by and look at rich men and their failures? What will some of you who are rich men say, over whom as you are growing older there is creeping a most depressing sense that you have been all your life playing with your riches as a child plays with diamonds? Are you not ready to say that if you could have carried from the first a deep strong sense of God, it would have been a point around which all your great melancholy, aimless, useless fortune, all your inherited wealth which has simply

kept you all these years from doing anything in this busy world, would have crystallized into the most vigorous shapes of character and usefulness. If your whole soul had been full of that knowledge all these years, how you would have been the master of your money, and lifted your little corner of the world with it as a lever, instead of its being your master as it has been, and either crushing you down with the anxious care of it, or wearing you out with the aimless spending of it; and it is hard to tell which of those two is worst.

When Jesus said to the rich young man "Go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor," he had simply found a man who did not know how to be rich. There was nothing to do with that man but to send him back to the preparatory school of poverty. To make that special treatment of a single man the universal rule of human life would be to shut up one of the great higher schools of human character in sheer despair. Sometimes perhaps a rich man feels that if he could get rid of his money he could be a strong and unselfish man. It is the old delusion. The sinner in the tropics thinks he could be a saint at the North Pole. It is only that he knows how the sun burns, but has never felt how the frost freezes. There is a special strength and a particular unselfishness which the rich man's wealth makes possible for him. It is his duty to seek after them, and never rest till he has found them; not to make himself poor, but to know how to be rich is the problem of his life.

These thoughts rise up in us with every outcry of poor men at the anomaly, — almost, some of the poor

would call it, the atrocity, — of some men being rich while other men are very poor. Such outcry there will always be; but at its heart that which makes such an outcry pathetic, and that alone which makes it dangerous, is that, often blindly and not able to understand or to define itself, it is an outcry not against rich men, but against rich men who do not know how to be rich. Always there will be angry protests against any man holding in any way, even the highest and most unselfish, wealth which the man who protests has failed to reach; but it is not this, — it is not wealth simply in itself, — it is the pride of wealth, the indifference of wealth, the cruelty of wealth, the vulgarity of wealth, in one great word the selfishness of wealth, which really makes the poor man's heart ache, and the poor man's blood boil, and constitutes the danger of a community where poor men and rich men live side by side. Let riches know "how to abound" and poverty will not lose its self-respect, and so will not struggle after the self-respect which it feels that it is losing, with frantic and tumultuous struggles. Oh, that every rich man and woman here might know this truth, and use it when their lives touch the sad and sore and hopeless lives of poor men at their side.

I must pass rapidly on and say what little there is time to say upon the other three divisions of my subject. I said that there were other kinds of abundance besides wealth. Think, if you will, for a few moments, about the abundance of knowledge. How clearly we discover as we watch the lives of learned men that there is something else needed besides the knowledge of truths; there

is the knowledge of how to know truths, without which a very large part of learning is a waste and failure. Do you see what I mean? Here is a scholar who has accumulated all the facts which it is possible for him to know about his special science. He knows them all. You cannot ask him for one of them that he does not instantly hold it out to you in his ready hand. Why is it that you do not feel any enrichment of mind, any enlargement of nature or character with all his wonderful acquirements? Why is it that as he has grown more and more of an encyclopedia, he has grown less and less perhaps, certainly not more and more, of a man? Why is it that with your ever-increasing wonder at what he knows, you have no increased respect for him? He has no deep convictions. He has no strengthened reason. Knowledge has come to him but wisdom has lingered; not in a technical or special meaning, but in a deep and human sense he has no faith! Or perhaps what strikes you still more is that his best and most helpful relations to his fellow-men have faded away in the thin air of his study. He has grown less human as his learning has increased. His sympathies have dried up. He values his knowledge as the botanist values his flower, — for the curiousness of its structure; not as the gardener values his flower, — for the richness of life which it contains. He prefers to press his flower in a heavy book, rather than to plant it in the warm and fructifying earth.

What can we say of such a scholar but that he does not know how to know. There is a science of knowledge, as well as a science of fossils, and a science of

stars. The sacredness of all knowledge as the gift of God; the unity of all knowledge as the utterance of God; the purpose of all knowledge as the food of character in the knower and the helper of humanity through him, — these are the great departments of that science. Sometimes we see a scholar who has learned them all, and what a new vision he gives us of the glory of scholarship! Men who know less than he do not begrudge or disparage his knowledge. The light that is in him is not darkness; it lightens all his world. And oh, my friends, boys studying at college, men and women reading books and struggling so restlessly for culture, there is no way to fully win this highest knowledge, — the knowledge of how to know, — but in the service of the God of Light, who is also the God of Love, the God of Character, the God of Man. Any industrious man with a good brain and a good memory can know things if he will; only the reverent and devoted man can know how to know.

Or turn your thoughts to another sort of abundance — the abundance of friendship and acquaintances. "Happy the man of many friends," we say; but hardly have we said it when we stop ourselves. So many of the men of many friends whom we have known have run to waste. So many of the popular men have been tyrannized over and ruined by their popularity. Their principles have crumbled; their selfhood has melted away; they have become mere stocks and stones for foolish men to hang garlands on, not real men, real utterances of divine life, leading their fellow-men, rebuking sins, inspiring struggles, saving souls.

Ah, yes! Not merely to make men love you and honor you, but to know how to be loved and honored without losing yourself and growing weak, — that is the problem of many of the sweetest, richest, most attractive lives; and there is only one solution for it, which blessed indeed is he who has discovered! To stiffen yourself against the praise and honor of your fellow-men, to make yourself insensible, to be a stoic and insist you will not care what men think of you, that is the base way of escape; that is as if a rich man escaped avarice by throwing his money in the sea, or as if a scholar escaped pedantry by laboriously forgetting all he knew.

But if the much-beloved man can look up and demand the love of God; if, catching sight of that, he can crave it and covet it infinitely above all other love; if, laying hold of its great freedom, he can make it his, and know that he loves God, and know that God loves him, — then he is free. Then let him come back and take into a glowing heart the warmest admiration and affection of his brethren; let him walk the earth with hosts of friends, the heaven that he carries in his heart preserves him. They cannot make him conceited, for he who lives with God must be humble. They cannot drown his selfhood, for the God he loves and serves is always laying upon him his own personal duties, and bringing the soul before its own judgment-seat every day. He who knows that God loves and honors him may freely take all other love and honor, however abundant they may be, and he will get no harm. All that is weak and foolish and unworthy in them, he will cast aside; all that is worthy he will take worthily.

And now I come to the last sort of abundance of which I wish to speak. It is that which belongs to the Christian experience. I speak to Christian men, — to those men who are living in the acknowledged and recognized obedience of Christ. Sad is the Christian life to which there do not come times when the soul seems to be living in great spiritual abundance. The world of the soul grows rich; doubts disappear; faith becomes easy; the assurance of God is on every side; the church overruns with helpfulness; trust is the happy instinct of the heart; peace, like a great sun-lit ocean, receives the soul and soothes its anxieties and pains, and makes it think itself almost in heaven. Oh, those are very sacred days! No other soul may know in what abundance you are living; but, in a joy too deep for songs, you live on, and no sorrow has the power to make you sorrowful. Then is the time, my friend, my Christian friend, when you do indeed need to know how to abound. For such times have their very deep and subtle dangers. Spiritual content, self-satisfaction, idleness, are waiting at the door; and at the other door the powers of reaction, — fear which will feed upon the triumph of this very hope, distrust which will be all the stronger for this earnest faith, they too are waiting for their chance. Oh, critical moment of a Christian life! Then everything depends on whether you are wise enough to know that only by duty, only by some brave, self-sacrificing service of this Christ of whose love all your soul is full, can Christ's love come to be your permanent possession, and this peace and exaltation be made more than mere spiritual luxuries, — be

made indeed a true new life. Many a Christian has failed just there. Soon the great light, unused, has faded away and left the soul in darkness. Soon peace which was not vitalized to power has decayed to pride. Something of this kind has come, I think, to whole generations, to whole periods of Christianity. But see! If you lift up your head, if you put out your hand and take your task, which certainly is waiting for you, then instantly your high emotions know their place. They turn themselves to motives. They become the necessary habits of the life. They prove their reality by what they can make you strong to do. No cloud can hide them from you, no Satan's hand can rob you of them, for they have entered in through the open door of your will, and have become a true part of you.

If there are any of you, dear friends, to whom to-day, by the kind grace of God, peace and faith and vision are thus rich and real, I beg you to bestir yourself and make them yours forever by doing some great hard duty in their strength. That is the only way to keep them. Let no spiritual exaltation come to you without your lifting yourself up in its present power, and doing some work for God which in your weaker moments and lower moods has scared you with its difficulty. For duty is the only tabernacle within which a man can always make his home upon the transfiguration mountain.

And so in each of these several departments of our life it is not enough that a man shall have attained abundance, he must also know how to abound in riches, in learning, in friendship, in spiritual privilege; there is a

deeper knowledge which alone can fasten the treasure which you have won, and make it truly yours, and draw out its best use. What a great principle that is! Under that principle, as I said, a man may even be the master of the heart and soul of some possessions whose form he does not own. I know that Jesus, the poor man who walked through rich Jerusalem and had not where to lay his head, had still the key of all that wealth. He knew how to be rich, and so He was more master of the heart of riches than any of the rich men in the great houses, whose wealth was crushing them into misers, or dissipating their powers in frivolity. And so with you and me; we cannot attain to all abundance in this one short life which is our only one, but if we can come to God and be His servants, the knowledge of how to be things which we shall never be may enter into us. In poverty we may have the blessing of riches; in enforced ignorance the blessing of knowledge; in loneliness the blessing of friendship; and in suspense and doubt the blessing of peace and rest.

Let me close all that I have said this morning with two exhortations.

There are struggling men here, — men working day and night for the precious things which make life full and rich. Go on and struggle; only remember that your struggle will be worthless, however you may get the things you seek, unless you can get not merely the bodies of those things but their souls. This was Christ's exhortation, "Not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting

life." Be satisfied with no gain unless you can carry into its possession such a soul and spirit that it can make of you a better, a truer, and a larger man.

And oh, my young friends, prosperous and happy, with life all full of hope and chance and light, go on and take the great abundance which God is offering you; only do not dare to go on into it all until first you have prayed to God that He will make you know how to abound. Pray for new hearts, large hearts which shall be worthy of your privileges, and then go on and without a fear take them all; for no lot is too rich for a soul that enters into it full of humility before God, and love for fellow-man, and a deep desire for holiness. So may you go on to all the blessings of full and happy lives.

X.

HOW TO BE ABASED.

I know how to be abased. — PHIL. iv. 12.

I SPOKE to you last Sunday about knowing how to be rich. Let us think to-day about knowing how to be poor. Saint Paul declared that he had both kinds of knowledge, and certainly he had had the chance to win this last; for his had been a life of poverty. First as the poor student, then as the poor missionary, he had never known what it was to live an easy life. He had met all the temptations, he had enjoyed all the opportunities which hardship involves. He knew them from his personal experience. And after all, the knowledge of hardship and privation which comes from personal experience, must always have a reality which cannot belong to any other kind of knowledge of them. There is a way, a true way, — as I pointed out last Sunday, — in which a man may be able to say in the midst of his abundance, "I know how to live the life which is destitute of all this." There is a central knowledge, a knowledge of the heart of things, a consecration to God who is the King and Heart of things, which makes it possible for one to know conditions in which he has never lived; but still the supreme reality of personal experience remains. The poor man looks askance while the rich man talks to

him about poverty. "Wait till you have tried it," he says. And the rich man owns the rebuke to his theoretical wisdom and is silent and almost ashamed. Nothing of this kind is there in Saint Paul. However we may have hesitated when he said, "I know how to abound," when he says this other thing, "I know how to be abased," we accept most cordially the self-assertion of a man who has come out of the midst of persecutions and disappointments and disasters and poverty, with a strength of character and a record of work which has been one of the great glories of the world.

All men have owned that the knowledge which Paul claimed is not an easy one to win or keep. To know how to be poor! Plenty of people there are who are set down to the hard lesson. Plenty of people — yes, all people, in different degrees and different ways — are led into some disappointment and abasement, but how few seem to stand in it evidently the stronger and the better for it. How few look when they are in it as if they understood it, and come out of it as if it had done them good. Indeed, men's feeling with regard to the possible blessing of adversity and trouble is, I think, very suggestive and significant. They know there is some secret hidden there, but it seems to be hidden so profoundly that it is almost hopeless to find it, and the effort to find it is most dangerous. Poverty seems to men to be like the old fabled sphinx, — a mysterious being who has in herself the secrets of life, but who holds them fast, and tells them only in riddles, and devours the brave, unfortunate adventurers who try to guess at the wisdom she conceals and fail. The result

is that few men seek her wisdom voluntarily. It is only when all the other schools turn them out that they will go to hers. Her gifts of wisdom seem to be possibly very rich, but actually very hard to win, and to be meant for single and exceptional souls rather than for the ordinary run of men. Is not this the feeling about the uses of adversity, — that, while probably the few very best men which the world has seen have been trained by disappointment, the general mass of the world's average virtue has been educated by success; that disappointment and difficulty make the officers, but prosperity makes the rank and file of the great human army; that while the best man in all the world today, probably, if we could find him, would prove to be a very poor man, — perhaps a man just on the brink of starvation, — it is the moderately comfortable classes of mankind in which you will find the highest level of good and comely living? If these are the ordinary judgments of mankind about the blessing of abasement, I think we ought to be interested in what Paul's words suggest about knowing how to be poor.

And at the very outset, to come at once to the controlling idea of what we have to say, do we not feel in Saint Paul's words a certain tone and accent which convey to us some sort of idea that to him abasement, as he called it, was a positive thing, was not simply a condition of privation, but was something definite and real, — something with a character and influences of its own; not merely a condition of being without something, but a condition of being with, of being in, something else? You cannot imagine him as he writes

thinking of himself as one who is waiting outside of doors where he is wholly anxious to enter in, the cultivation which comes to him as he stands outside being only the negative education of patience. It is evidently a distinct region of life in which he finds himself, where so long as he lives there is a special harvest for him to reap which he could reap nowhere else. To recognize the land in which he finds himself, and to reap the harvest which he finds waiting for him there, — that is the knowledge of how to be abased which Paul is thankfully claiming; that is what all his life of abasement has given him.

This appears in many of the words of Paul. He writes to the Corinthians, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." There is a noble dignity about those words. They are not the words of one who is merely trying to console himself for the lack of comfort, and to hold out till comfort shall bestow itself upon him. They are the words of a man whom circumstances, which he knows to be the hands of God, have led into a certain life. He has not led himself there; he has not chosen poverty; he has not tried to be poor; but being in that land of poverty, he looks about, and lo! it is not barren. It has pleasures, revelations, cultivations of its own. It has its own peculiar relationships to God. It is not necessary to say whether it is poorer or richer than the other land, the land of profusion and abundance. It is a true land by itself; and Paul, who lives there, honors and respects it, and so it honors him

and gives him freely its own peculiar strength; and he stands in the midst of it and cries, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Is there not here a true intelligible picture of the way in which a man may know how to be abased? If it is possible to look upon a limited, restricted life as a certain kind of life with its own peculiar chances and enlightenments out of which a man, if he knows how, may get a character; in which a man, if he knows how, may live a life which would be impossible elsewhere, — then certainly this limited, restricted life may win and hold an affectionate respect which is a positive thing and may be very strong and real. We need not be haunted with the demon of comparison; we need not say whether the cultures and pleasures of abasement are greater or less than those of abundance; enough that it has its own, peculiar to itself, and full of value. Life is a medal with two sides; the other side, as we choose to call it, has its own image and superscription, and is not made up only of the depressions which are necessary to make the elevations on the face. Or change the figure: we live here in rocky New England. Surely there is something more to say of its harsh landscape than simply that it has not the palms of Egypt or the oranges of Florida. We need not talk of it or think of it in negatives. It has its own peculiar wealth of forest and pasture and pond; it has its own peculiar beauty of rocky ridges and broad sea-shore beaches; it has its own sky and soil and water; and we who live here are not merely resigned to our New England life and climate from necessity. We honor it and love it for its

own intrinsic qualities. The pine-tree is as real a thing as the palm-tree. It does not be a pine-tree merely because it cannot be a palm; and surely it has no complaint to make. This is the picture in my mind of the positive nature of a life of abasement which makes it worthy of honor and respect.

Such an idea as this is not in any way inconsistent with the constant struggle of the abased and limited life toward profusion and enrichment. Each stage or kind of existence keeps the possibilities of its own character, although it feels the impulse which is always moving it on toward another stage or kind of life. Boyhood is a positive thing while it lasts, although it is forever being carried on toward manhood. Rugged New England may still struggle to improve her soil and grow as near the palm-tree as she can, while still she treasures and honors the characteristics which her present condition has decreed. To honor the life you live in now and here for its intrinsic goodness, part of that goodness consisting in the fact that it may open into some more abundant life, so to hold within it in perfect balance contentment and hope together, — that certainly must be the way for a man to get the best out of any stage of living.

I shall venture to take again for the illustration and enforcement of what I have been saying, the same enumeration of the departments of living which I used last Sunday. Abasement of life, like enrichment of life, is a term which may be applied to wealth or to learning or to friendships or to spiritual privilege. Let me speak of each.

Here is the poor man then — in the most literal sense, the man who has not money! His face and figure is familiar enough. I rejoice to know that he is here this morning, and that I may speak to him to-day as I spoke last Sunday to his wealthier friend. I should be sorry indeed to be the minister of any church in which I might not speak to both. And how shall one speak to the poor man? That must depend upon what the speaker thinks he sees in the poor man's face, upon what is the attitude in which the poor man stands toward life. What some of his possible attitudes toward life are, we know. To take the meanest first, he may be servile and cringing in the presence of a wealth some of whose overflowing crumbs he thinks that he can coax to fall into his lap; or, with more spirit, he may be eagerly envious and jealous, over-estimating the unknown luxury of wealth, and restless so long as he must go without the things his richer neighbors have; always in feverish struggle to be rich himself. Or, with the same cause working just the other way, he may despise the abundance which has not fallen to his lot. He may denounce wealth as wickedness; he may grow bitter and morose, and talk about his poverty, which certainly he has not deliberately chosen, as if it had somehow a sort of merit in itself. Now all these attitudes of the poor man toward life, different as they are from one another, have this in common, — that they are all shaped and controlled by the man's perpetual consciousness that he is not as rich as other men; therefore they all have a touch of slavishness about them. If my neighbor's wealth keeps me in a condition of continual

defiance, I am as much the slave of it as if it kept me in a condition of continual obsequience. It controls my life. It decides what I shall be, and interferes with my self-decision; and that is slavery.

But now suppose that some bright day of freedom comes, — some day when I forget comparisons and do not think whether my neighbor is richer or poorer than I. Still I am just as poor as I was before. Still all the positive condition of my poverty remains, but now it is positive not negative, not relative; and so it has a chance to show me its true character. A rugged, barren land it is to live in still, — a land where I am thankful very often if I can get a berry or a root to eat; but living in it really, letting it bear witness to me of itself, not dishonoring it all the time by judging it after the standards of the other lands, gradually there come out its qualities. Behold! no land like this barren and naked land of poverty could show the moral geology of the world. See how the hard ribs which make the stony structure of the planet stand out strong and solid. No life like poverty could so get one to the heart of things and make men know their meaning, could so let us feel life and the world with all the soft cushions stripped off and thrown away. No life like poverty could call out such need for struggle. Poverty makes men come very near each other, and recognize each other's human hearts; and poverty, highest and best of all, demands and cries out for faith in God. Not with a greater need, but with a more ready consciousness of need, than wealth, it turns in the destitution of external things to the internal, to the spiritual, to the eternal, to God.

Now it is not right to think of these things as mere mitigations of a lot whose real intrinsic quality is that it is not wealthy. On the contrary, they themselves make a lot with its own qualities, with a value of its own. Do you quietly laugh and say, "At least, however fine you may make them sound as you describe them, no man would ever see in them such a value that he would be poor for the sake of living the life which those things make"? The answer is, "Men have done it. Men of other races, other standards, other natures than yours have deliberately chosen poverty because it seemed to make the richest and most honorable life. And men of all races, of all times, who have not chosen it but have been led into it by God, have found when they had come there a true life which satisfied them."

I know how superficial and unfeeling, how like mere mockery, words in praise of poverty may seem. I am not taunting the poor man by telling him that it is better to be poor. God forbid! But I am sure that the poor man's dignity and freedom, his self-respect and energy, depend upon his cordial knowledge that his poverty is a true region and kind of life with its own chances of character, its own springs of happiness, and revelations of God. Let him resist the characterlessness which often comes with being poor. Let him insist on respecting the condition where he lives. Let him learn to love it so that by and by when he grows rich he shall go out of the low door of the old familiar poverty with a true pang of regret, and with a true honor for the narrow home where he has lived so long, and which he leaves to other men. We know that such

a reverence of the poor man for his poverty is possible; for men enough whom we could name have borne indubitable testimony that they have felt it. Sometimes it has been almost elevated and incorporated into a religion. We know that any man who truly feels that reverence for his own poverty is thereby liberated from the worst part of the slavery to wealth. He may still struggle to be rich, but he is not the slave of other men's riches nor of his own unwon wealth for which he strives. Calm, dignified, self-respectful, with no bitterness and no pride, — who but he is the man who knows how to be abased?

I must pass on and speak about the way in which a man may know how to be poor in learning. That was our second point. There are many of us who need that knowledge, — many of us who before we have got well into life see what a great world learning is, and also see for a certainty how hopeless it is that we shall ever do more than set our feet upon its very outermost borders. Some life of practical duty claims us; some career of business all made up of hard details, sharp, clear, inexorable, each one requiring to be dealt with on the instant, takes possession of us and holds us fast, and the great stream of learning into which we long to plunge and swim sweeps by our chained feet and we can only look down into its tempting waters and sigh over our fate. How many practical men — men who seem to be totally absorbed and perfectly satisfied in their busy life — really live in this discontent at being shut out from the richness of learning. Is there a right way and a wrong way, a wise way and a foolish way of liv-

ing in that discontent? Indeed there is. The foolish ways are evident enough. The unlearned man who by and by is heard sneering at learning, glorifying machineries, boasting that he sees and wants to see no visions and that he never theorizes, — he has not known how to be ignorant. He has let his ignorance master and overcome him. It has made him its slave. The man who, the more he became conscious of his hopelessness of great scholarship, has grown more and more sensible of what a great thing it is to be a scholar; and at the same time, by the same process, has grown more and more respectful toward his own side of life, more and more conscious of the value of practical living as a true contribution to the great final whole; the man therefore who has gone on his way, as most of us have to do, with little learning, but has also gone on his way doing duty faithfully, developing all the practical skill that is in him, and sometimes, just because their details are so dark to him, getting rich visions of the general light and glory of the great sciences, seen afar off, seen as great wholes, which often seem to be denied to the plodders who spend their lives in the close study of those sciences, — he is the man who knows how to be unlearned. It is a blessed thing that there is such a knowledge possible for overworked, practical men. The man who has that knowledge may be self-respectful in the face of all the colleges. He may stand before the kings of learning and not be ashamed; for his lot is as true a part of life as theirs, and he is bravely holding up his side of that great earth over which the plans of God are moving on to their completeness.

And next we speak about the destitution of friendships, which is the appointed life of many people. Is it a hard thing to know how to be poor in, perhaps almost destitute of, cordial associations with our fellow-men? "Let them pass me by! I know well enough how to do without their help or their society!" Who has not heard those scornful words coming out of the hot lips of some angry man, and been sure, as he heard them, that the man who spoke them did not know the very thing which he boasted that he knew so well. For, as I said last Sunday, no man knows how to do a thing, who does it so that it makes him a worse and not a better man. We say that society is a fine art. It may be true that solitude is a finer. To get along with our fellow-men seems often very hard, but to get along without them seems impossible.

But let me suppose that somewhere in these pews this morning is a man or woman whose life seems in some strange, marked way to have been left out of the great currents of humanity. Perhaps your very earliest days were without the protection of a father's and a mother's care; no circle of friends received you into the warm world of its hospitality; your own nature has not been such as has easily attracted friendship; your business has been of some solitary sort; and besides all these things, what we call accident has seemed to always break every crystallization just as it was being formed. Not even the church has seemed to gather your life into the natural and cordial society of other lives; so you have lived alone. Years, years ago you must have found what a problem had been set you in that iso-

lated life. You must have seen that as it offered you temptations and dangers, so it offered you also chances of its own. You must have seen that, without disparaging the social life which opened to other men more readily than it did to you, without ceasing to keep yourself ready for it if it came, there still were certain valuable things which, while it did not come, were peculiarly within the power of your solitude. Whether you have attained those valuable things or not, you can at least imagine what they are. Can you not picture to yourself a man who, shut out by any circumstances from most active contact with his fellow-men, became thereby a watcher of the universal human life in such a way, from such a point of view, that he saw it more truly than if he were in the very heart of its whirl and movement? A wiser insight, a larger knowledge of mankind, a broader vision of the significance and, one may say, of the glory of human life may surely come to him who looks at it, as it were, sympathetically from the outside, as a true man, and yet in some degree as a spectator of humanity. The planet Mars shines for us with a light which no citizen of Mars can see.

And then something more may come. The man thus gazing upon life may see in the larger aspects which are given to him, revelations of God. The Great King may show Himself to one who gazes with such thoughtful and broad view at His Kingdom. And then, having seen the King and loved Him, the watchful man may come back to the Kingdom which first revealed that King, and love it for His sake. Here is a noble and natural and beautiful progress. I am sure that it has

made the charm and strength of many men who have seemed somehow to be rather spectators of life than themselves deeply involved in the complexity of living. They have often been men who have loved their race with the deepest and the largest love. The enthusiasm of humanity often has seemed strong in them just in proportion as their lives had little contact with the personal lives around them, and it has come about through God. The large sight of the world has first led them to Him, and then from Him they have come back to love His Kingdom.

Now here is something which is much more than compensation and consolation. It is not a reward given by pity to make up for the loss of the privilege of social life. It is a life itself. It brings out its own qualities and powers in the man who lives it. He may think it better or worse than some other life; he may endeavor to pass out of it into a fuller life; but while he lives in it, it ought to be always making him more profoundly aware of his own soul, more reverent toward God, more able to think great thoughts of his fellow-men. If you must pass through what is even a desert to get to fertile, smiling lands beyond, still it is not good to count even the desert a mere necessary evil to be got through and forgotten as soon as possible. It is good as you plod through the sand to feed your eyes with the vastness and simplicity of the world which the monotony of sky and sand can most impressively display to you. So if God has appointed to any of us times of solitude and friendlessness, — perhaps times of unpopularity and neglect, — let us pray that we may not

pass through them, however dreary they may be, without bringing out from them greater conceptions of Him and of our fellow-men and of ourselves. This is the way in which a man may show that he has known how to live alone, or even to live neglected and despised.

And so we come to the last of our specified instances of abasement, — the loss of spiritual exaltation and delight. It is a loss indeed. Delight, enthusiasm, hope, content, — these are the true conditions of a Christian life, just as song is the true condition of the bird, or color of the rose. But just as the bird is still a bird although it cannot sing, and the rose is still a rose although its red grows dull and faded in some dark, close room where it is compelled to grow, — so the Christian is a Christian still, even although his soul is dark with doubt, and he goes staggering on, fearing every moment that he will fall, never daring to look up and hope. To such conditions of depression every Christian sometimes comes. In such a condition many Christians seem to live all along through their melancholy lives. What then? What shall we say? It is not good. It is not necessary. That we ought to know first of all. Let us beware of giving to such moods and conditions any such advantage as would come from thinking them to be the right and true condition of a humble Christian life. Humility for the Christian, the truest humility, means hope and enthusiasm. It must be so. Since the whole strength of the Christian experience is in the Saviour and not in the soul, the real acceptance of the Saviour by the soul must, just in proportion as it is complete, endow the soul with His vision and open

before it all His certain prospects of success. No! To be distrustful and gloomy in the Christian life is not a sign of humility; often it is a sign of pride. Yet the evident distinction still remains. A man may be a Christian and yet fail of a Christian's rapture and peace. And what then? While he walks in the darkness, he must know how to be abased. However he ought to be up and out of this condition, yet while he lives in it there is a right way and a wrong way for him to live. Then there comes in the great regulative force of duty, — duty, the due, the thing that ought to be done. Oh, how we come to value the perpetual ministry of that great power! I spoke last Sunday of how it kept the soul in its exaltations from flying wildly off into vague rhapsodies and dreams. Behold, to-day how this same power of duty preserves the soul in its depression from despair! Then when all higher light seems dark, may be the very time when the light on daily tasks grows clear. You cannot see the distant heaven. You cannot hear the songs of angels. You cannot even say assuredly that you know the love of God, — but you do know that to be brave and true and pure is better than to be cowardly and false and foul. You do know that there are men and women all about you suffering, some of them dying, for sympathy and help. You do know that whether God loves you or not, right is right! Oh, how these great simple assurances come out when the higher lights of the loftier experiences grow dark! I will not say, I dare not say, that God lets the heavenly light be darkened in order that these earthly duties may appear. I only say that when

the cloud stretches itself across the heavens, then, underneath the cloud and shut out from the sunshine, the imprisoned soul still finds for itself a rich life of duty, a life of self-control, a life of charity, a life of growth.

Is there some man or woman here who says, "My religious life has no exaltations, no high hopes. I am not equal to this life of depression. I do not know how to be abased. I do not know how to go on and be true to my religion, still shut out from its divinest hopes." What shall our answer be? The world of duty is your world. Go; do your duty, giving to every task the sublimest motive which you know and which you can bring to bear upon it. Get at the essence of goodness, which is not in its enthusiasms or delights, but in its heart of consecration. Sometimes the consecration may be all the more thorough and complete when the joy of consecration seems to be farthest away. And yet every consecration made in the darkness is reaching out toward the light, and in the end must come out into the light, strong in the strength which it won in its life and struggle in the dark.

So here, then, is one brief conclusion, — here is the result and substance of it all: Not to all men, not to any man always does God give complete abundance. To all men sometimes, to some men in long stretches of their lives, come the abasement times, — times of poverty, times of ignorance, times of friendlessness, times of distrust and doubt; but God does not mean that these times should be like great barren stretches and blanks in our lives only to be travelled over for the

sake of what lies beyond. To him who, like Paul, knows how to be abased, they have their own rich value. They do for him their own good work. To have our desire set on nothing absolutely except character, to be glad that God should lead us into any land where there is character to win, — this is the only real explanation of life. He that has it may be more than reconciled to living. He may do more than triumph over his abasements. He may make close friendships with them, so that he shall part from them with sorrow when he is called to go to the right hand of God where there is no more abasement, nothing but fulness forevermore.

XI.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. — 2 Cor. iv. 5.

The Church of Christ has been a power in the world for many years. More and more widely it has spread, till civilization is familiar with its presence; and over the borders of civilization it has run with its missionary influence, and in lands which once were civilized it has lingered with its persistent vitality, so that to-day it is hard to find any country which is the home of man wherein the Christian Church has not laid the corner-stones of its truth and lifted the spire of its hope.

It is possible at least to ascribe to the intrinsic vitality of the Church some of those features of her history which oftentimes seem strange. That she should have excited violent hatred as well as violent love; that she should have been variously conceived, and that men should have quarrelled over their various conceptions of her; that she should have actually been different things at different times, — all these indisputable facts are what might naturally have been looked for in a living system made of living men. They all have come. They fill the Church's history with life and movement. They bring her ever new, though ever old and still the same,

to each new age. They make the question, What then is the Church? a question always fit to ask and answer.

I shall not try to ask or answer it to-day. But on this morning when we are to ask you for your offerings for the extension of the Church's work and life in our own country, — for domestic missions, — I should like, as it has been my custom, to draw your thoughts to one or two truths about the Church and its people and its ministry which are very simple, but which I am not certain that we always carry in our memories.

We go back to the New Testament for the beginnings of the Church; and, when we once are there, — quite on the other side of all the discussions and refinements which have come in through all the Christian ages, — it is wonderful how simple it all is. Jesus Christ comes and preaches the Gospel of the Kingdom, and manifests the life of God. He stands with His shining nature upon the hill of the truth He has to preach. He is lifted up, by and by, in the fulness of His self-sacrifice upon His cross. Toward His light, soul after soul is drawn out of the darkness. Into the power of His self-sacrifice one life after another is summoned out of its discontent. It is all personal and individual at first. "As many as receive Him to them gives He power to become the Sons of God." It is this man and that man that is summoned. The light shines through this window and finds one laborer at his work. It smiles in through the smoke of some boisterous revel and fills some generous heart with shame. It smiles upon some dreamer and turns his dream into a purpose. It is all personal and individual. "Follow me," "Follow me,"

and Matthew leaves his tax-table standing in the street; and the sons of Zebedee pull hastily in over the blue water to give themselves to the Master, who has called them from the shore.

And what came next? Why, the most natural thing in all the world, — that which must always come when single men believe the same truth, or are driven on by the same impulse. When did a host of scholars ever sit at the same teacher's feet and not become a school? When did a host of separate soldiers go each to fight the same enemy and not be drawn into an army? When were a multitude of atoms ever filled with one magnetism and not brought into magnetic communion with each other? All the individual believers in, and followers of, Christ become one in their common loyalty and love. And so out of the crowd of disciples comes the Church.

By and by a change approaches. The fountain out of which the Church life visibly has sprung, the Master who has called each of these disciples audibly to Himself, is just about to vanish from their sight. He is to be still to each of them, and to each of those who shall come after them, the same which He has always been. Still, with His unseen presence, He is to give His separate summons to every soul. The unity of His believers to the end of time is still to have the secret of its existence in the personal relation between each of them and Him. To help this invisible relation to realize itself and not to be all lost in the unseen, the gracious kindness of the Master provides two symbols which thenceforth become the pledges at once of the personal

believer's belonging to the Lord, and of the belonging of believers to each other. The sacraments are set like gems to hold the Church into its precious unity.

Such is the Church. The union of believers, outwardly manifested by the sacraments, but having its essence in the personal union of each believer's soul with Christ. I see the gates of the New Testament open outward. That life which had been taking shape within the little world which the New Testament enclosed, goes forth so quietly, so simply to meet the larger life of the world! It is Peter coming down from the house-top to go to Cornelius at Cesarea. It is Paul crossing over from Troas into Macedonia. I see the history which has come since. And all bears testimony to the naturalness of the New Testament process by the way in which it has possessed the world. This Jesus must be a true Lord of men. This power which draws His disciples to each other must be a genuine power. These sacraments must be intrinsically natural utterances of what they try to express; for, lo, everywhere the Church has built itself! In every age, in every land she stands, her single life pulsating with the multitudinous life of which she is composed, the ultimate pulsation coming from the living life of her Master, to which every particle of her being immediately responds; the two jewels on her breast-plate burning with ever-deepening and accumulating richness, and making together the clasp which holds about her essential nature the robe of her outward form.

This is the Christian Church, — the most glorious because the most natural, the most natural because the

most glorious, of all the associations and institutions of mankind. But as yet, you see, we have not spoken of that which sometimes seems to stand forth first in people's thinking of the Church. We have not spoken of the ministry, and we are right. The Church exists before the ministry. Jesus has gathered His disciples. They are united each to Him, and through Him they are all united to each other; and then, one day, out of the group of those disciples He chooses twelve whom also He calls apostles. They are disciples first, and their discipleship lies behind their apostleship until the end. Out from the body of the Church rise certain men, called by the Lord to whom the Church belongs, in whom all that the Church means shall be peculiarly represented, who shall tell its story to the world, who shall both cultivate and manifest its life. They are to build the Church, and to declare the Church. They are not to rule the Church, certainly not to be the Church. That is what has taken place ever since. Out of the great body of Christians have stood forth the Christian leaders. Now with one sort of ordination, now with another; now with the summons of the people, now with the irresistible impulse of their own souls; now with the direct call of God most clear and plain, but always, if they were truly ministers of Christ, with all three consenting and confederate to give them their position, — in every age, in every land there have stood forth the Church's ministers (true successors of the first apostles), some more and some less visibly united to those earliest ministers by their forms of faith and action; but all successors of the apostles

in the nature and the spirit of the work they had to do.

And that ministry, what was it, what is it, to the Church? Is it the Church's master? Is it the sole and solemn channel through which divine truth and the divine will comes to the waiting hearts which could know neither but for it? Is it the stream through which alone grace flows out of the Fountain of Grace, which is the heart of God? That were a clear idea, a most distinct and unmistakable theory. That would set the people following wherever the ministry chose to lead. That would reduce all duty to one single duty, obedience, perfect obedience to the spiritual lord. But also that would either deny or render insignificant the very fact from which, as we saw, the Church took its existence. That fact is the personal communion between each believer and the Christ. That fact must not be tampered with. No ministry of any most thoroughly ordained apostle must relieve the individual soul of its responsibility or rob the individual soul of its privilege of immediate search after the truth, immediate submission to the commandment of its Lord. What then? There is only one other place for the ministry to hold. If it is not the master it must be the servant of the Church. If it is not set to rule, it must rejoice to obey; to know the Church to be greater than it and not its creature, to accept it as its highest duty to help the Church to realize itself, and to grow into the full power of the Divine Life of which it, through the relation between Christ and the souls of its individual members, is perpetually the recipient.

Ruler or servant, which shall it be? Strange how from the first the very name by which the successors of the apostles have been called has seemed to answer the question for itself. They have been ministers; and "ministers" means "servants." Strange how the greatest of them all at the beginning took pains to claim the place in which he and his brethren should stand. "Not for that we have dominion over your faith," cried Paul, "but we are partakers of your joy." And then again in those great words which I have made my text, — "We preach ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." Strange that, with words like these written in the very forefront of its shining history, the Church should have so loved the other notion of the rulership of the clergy, the dominion of the priest; and hierarchies, splendid with pomp, or subtle with intrigue, but always hard with tyranny, should have so filled the story of the Christian ages.

And yet not strange! Nothing is strange whose illustrations occur alike in every region of human life. And where is the department of living in which servantship has not always tried to turn itself into rulership, and had with long delay and difficulty to be brought back to the higher idea of servantship again. Certainly it is so in government. What is the world learning after all these years except that the governor is the servant of his people? After centuries of tyranny and subjectship, — centuries in which the people seemed to exist only by the ruler's permission, and to have no power of originating thought and action, — everything is changed. In all of civilized Christendom there is no king who

dares to claim that he is anything but the people's servant, that his power came from them, and that their will must lie behind his everywhere.

That idea of servantship has never been so absolutely lost in religion as it has in politics; but if you read the story of five centuries ago, or if you see the visions which floating before the eyes of priests have been incorporated into ecclesiastical institutions, you will become aware of how the other idea, — the idea of lordship, — has always been pressing for assertion. Lord-Bishops and Lord-Presbyters, Church Barons and Church Princes, Popes, Prelates, Potentates, — they all bear witness to the presence of a theory that the Church exists first in the clergy, and that the laity become part of the Church only by the extension of the clergy's life to them. Against that theory stands up the other: that the laity are the Church, and that the clergy exist separate from them only to carry out the purposes of their life, to do in special and peculiar ways what it is the duty and privilege of the whole Church to do, — in one great word to be the Church's servants, not its lords.

There is indeed one word in our own church's use which seems at first to give a color to the other theory. The minister of any parish is called its "rector" or its "ruler." And no doubt much of the direction of the parish's affairs is given to his hands. What is his power? I take it to be very much like that which the company of any ship intrusts to one among their number whom they make their steersman. They set him at the helm; they put the rudder in his hands; they bid him watch the compass and the stars, — but it is all a

delegation of their power. He has no right to sail the ship to any other than the port they wish to reach. They really steer the ship in him. He is their servant still, obeying the commandment which they gave him when they said, "Guide us and help us find our way."

But then the question comes whether with such an idea of the ministry as this, it is possible to think of it and speak of it as a divine institution, — as something instituted and ordained by God Himself. Why not? It all depends on where we let ourselves get into the habit of looking for the work of God and discovering the operations of His hands. If we can see God only in movements quite outside of the natural proceedings of humanity, then we shall hardly think of any ministry as being divinely ordered, unless it come down to us in a chariot out of the sky, or else a hand be reached forth from heaven to rest upon the head of the selected priest. But if we thoroughly believe that God's activity is never more potent than when His children, full of the love and fear of Him, give Him the opportunity to work through them, then surely there can be no ordination more complete or solemn than that which draws forth from the host of worshipping and working Christians here one and there another to be in special ways that which they all are in the essence of their Christianity; to be, as Saint Paul says, "helpers of their joy." Do you or I believe that the President of the United States is less divinely called to his high place than Henry the Eighth or Charles the First was set upon the throne of England. And yet the president is the people's servant, and the kings were

tyrants. When from the depths of any nation's life there stirs a consciousness of need which finally by a deliberate choice calls forth one man and says to him, "Be our guide," and he obeys, I know not where to find a more true utterance of God's will than that.

The very methods of the early Christian life sound crude to-day. We read the story of how they chose Matthias by lot to fill the place of Judas. We hear their prayer to God that He will guide the drawing of the numbered disk. We watch them as they stand around with serious exalted faces waiting the result. It is all true, inspiring, and impressive; but what is it compared with the movement of God's spirit through a church, bidding it summon this or that earnest soul to help it and to show it of His love. A group of Christian hearts is a nobler and more sensitive medium for God to speak through than a handful of pebbles in an urn. God may speak through either; surely the Voice through the sacred, the divine medium of Man will be the more sacred, the more divine.

There are three possible calls to every minister, — the call of God, the call of his own nature, and the call of needy men. May not one almost say that no man has a right to think himself a minister who does not hear all three vocations blending into one and marking out his path to walk in past all doubt. And these three come to perfect union in the soul of him who hears the Father call one of His children to serve the rest in those great necessities which belong to them all.

And if we ask not simply about the sacredness of the

ordination, but about the inspiration that goes with it, the answer is no less clear. Which will inspire a man most, which will carry him most buoyantly through a long life of labor, making the last years more eager and exhilarating than the first, the joy of ruling men or the joy of serving men? He little knows what human nature is who hesitates about his answer. You may indeed feel the identity between the two. You may see how each, realized at its fullest, becomes the other; how he who rules men most wisely, serves them most humbly; and he who serves men most efficiently, rules them most powerfully; but taking them in their ordinary distinction from each other, it is a nobler relation to a man to serve him than it is to rule him. Rulership stifles and hardens the nature which it deals with. Servantship opens and softens it. Rulership is unsympathetic. Servantship is full of sympathy. Rulership is monotonous and works by law. Servantship is ingenious and various and free. Rulership is self-conscious. Servantship is self-forgetful. The ruler grows tired on his throne. The servant sees his working-room always alive with desire and need.

One sees the young men pressing in at the gates of life, eagerly asking what there is to do in this great, busy world, and he longs to hold out to them the privilege of the Christian ministry. I see the young men of this congregation; I have seen them for almost twenty years. I have watched some of them as they have taken their places as ministers, and are doing the Gospel work. I have seen the great host of them going other ways. I see the great host of them going other

ways to-day. They turn to honest, useful, interesting work on every side. I rejoice in all that they are doing and will do, but all the time I ask myself, "Why is it that they do not more largely seek the ministry of Christ?" I would that I could put the privilege of that ministry before them as it seems to us who have long lived in it. I wish that some one here this morning might so see it that it might win his life. I believe so fully that the Christian ministry in the next fifty years is to have a nobler opportunity of usefulness and power than it has ever had in the past, that I would gladly call, if I could, with the voice of a trumpet to the brave, earnest, cultivated young men who are to live in the next fifty years to enter into it, and share the privilege of that work together.

And the word with which I would summon them should be that great word "service." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," Jesus said. It was an announcement, not of mortification, but of satisfaction. It was not saying, "You must disappoint your desire," but "You must fulfil it." The fulfilment of life is service. And then He stretched out His arms, and with that self-assertion which no other son of man has ever dared to make, He bade them see the illustration of what He had just told them in Himself. "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister," He said.

The man who ministers, the man who is a minister, — that is, a servant, — enters into the company of Jesus. He lives with Him who gave His life for men, and in so doing, lived supremely. He undertakes the

sympathetic study of humanity in every part. He clothes his life with honor for human nature. He believes in man as clogged, hindered, and broken, but as capable of purification and rectification by the power of God which he may help to bring into exercise upon it; and so he undertakes his service. Is there any theory of rulership which can compare with that for the exhilaration and elevation of a devoted man?

But the ministry does not exist for the good of the ministers, but for the good of the people; and so it is necessary — before we are sure that any conception of the ministry is thoroughly good and true — that we should see if that theory will help the people to their best life. What then will be the effect upon the people of being taught that their ministers are indeed their ministers, their servants? There is one effect which it might produce which would indeed be a blessing. It might make the people feel and accept their true responsibility. If they are indeed the Church, charged with its interests, with its progress dependent upon them, they must be full of thought and care and study. They must know how their charge is faring. Their eyes must be here at home and at the ends of the earth at the same time. They are the Church, and its disgrace or honor, its success or failure, is theirs.

There have been great times, some far back in the early history, some in the modern days, in which the whole body of the Church has seemed in large degree ready to claim its privilege. The problems of religion have seemed to be all men's problems. The worship of the House of God has seemed to be all men's care.

The extension of the truth, the spread of missions, has enlisted all men's anxiety and ingenuity. At those times the ministers have seemed really to be what they ought to be, not strange, foreign beings dropped down from the skies, or blown into a region with which they had no affinity out of some wholly alien world. They have been part and parcel of the life from which they sprang, and which always lay behind them and fed them with its strength. They were the leaders of the people only as the first curling wave which runs up farthest on the beach is the leader of the great world of waves which stretches out behind it, all crowding forward, all uttering its shoreward impulse in the servant-wave which bears its banner, and tells of its desire.

The Church — our church like all the rest — falls too far short of this idea. It is too much a clergyman's church. The people sit too much and say, "Tell us what we shall think," instead of turning their own thoughts to the most sacred things, and by and by being able to say, "We think this; help us, O servants and friends of ours, to see if it be true." The people sit too much and say, "Tell us what to do," instead of coming with their hands full of plans, saying, "This needs to be done. Do it, O servants and friends of ours, and we will supply you with all the means and help you need. It is our work."

Do you not feel, even as I speak, what a breadth and freshness and freedom and variety and vitality would come into the Church's thought and working if the Church itself — which is the people, not the clergy — really did think and work, and with a true sense of

responsibility and a true initiative impulse accepted the privilege of their commission?

Sometimes we hear our American system of Church management abused and even ridiculed. And no doubt it is liable to manifest theoretical objections. It is capable of being made to seem very absurd that a congregation should ask a man to come and be their teacher, but insist that they will only ask him with the understanding that he believes what they believe, and that if he comes to believe otherwise than they do, he will go away and teach them no longer. Such theoretical objections are easy to draw up in telling shape, but they amount to very little. They are of no consequence whatever compared with that, the real fact of value about our system, — which is, that the people are, at least declaredly, the living and effective body of the Church. The power and the responsibility reside in them. They have the real apostolical succession. Only this certainly is true, — that, with a system at whose heart is such a truth, we are bound to carry that truth out into activity with vastly more completeness than we do now. It will not do for the people to hold the power and try to give the responsibility away. Power and responsibility must go together. If the Church, as it ought, counts the ministers its servants, it must assume the deeper and higher and more exigent prerogatives of mastery, and think and study and believe and act with the energy and earnestness of a true Church of God.

There is good reason to believe that the people in all the churches — and in our church as well as all the

others — show signs to-day that they will recognize and claim their place. There is more general thought about religious truth. There is more spontaneous activity in Christian work. Men come into the Church's communion less and less from mere drift and habit, more and more with serious question about what it means. If the clergyman is less reverenced as an autocrat and less consulted as an oracle, he is more used as a willing servant, and more valued as a faithful friend.

For you will freely understand how, in all that I have said this morning, the word "servant" must be completely stripped of a great deal of base association before it can be put to the high use which I have claimed for it. It must be not contradictory to, but identical with, the other word which I have just linked to it, the word "friend." "Servus Servorum Dei," — the servant of the servants of God, — so the most gorgeous of ecclesiastical princes has called himself, reverting ever to the first and truest thought of what he is. And yet "Amicus Amicorum Dei," — friend of the friends of God, — surely that too must be his name. All hardness, all reluctance, all tyranny on the one side, and all obsequiency on the other side, must pass away. And then in an atmosphere of mutual service — which is also an atmosphere of mutual love — the lives of minister and people must give themselves each to the other, and both to the work of Christ and of His Church.

The Church of the Millennial days shall be nothing less, nothing else than a regenerated and complete humanity. There all shall be ministers, for all shall be servants. All shall be people, for all shall be served.

In these imperfect days let us watch and wait for those days of perfectness. Let us do all we can to help their coming. Let us count no condition final till they come. Let us live in, and live for, and never despair of, the ever-advancing, ever-enlarging Church of Christ.

XII.

THE OPENING OF THE EYES.

Jesus said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him. — JOHN ix. 35–38.

THERE is always a deep fascination for us in seeing exactly how another person's mind works. Some people are very attractive simply from a transparency which lets us look in perfectly upon their mental movements and see just how all their processes work out their conclusions, even if there is nothing remarkable in the processes themselves. And even with the other kind of attraction which belongs to very difficult and reserved people, whose mental action it is hard to follow, the secret of it is still the same; for what draws us to them is merely the desire to do what seems so hard, to catch some sound of the machinery which they conceal so well, and guess how it is working. We are unable to accept any result without supposing a process behind it.

In all the outward works of men, in all that their bodies do, we see the process perfectly, and trace it perfectly to the result, and all is very satisfactory. We see the mason lay every brick, and so the house

when it is done is perfectly accountable. At the other extreme all the highest workings, all God's workings, we cannot trace. Results stand out alone. There we have miracles. Between the two, half-hidden, half-discoverable, always tempting us to discover more, there are men's mental movements. Some part they will not tell us, other parts they cannot. We watch the processes by which our neighbors come to their conclusions; and they elude us like a stream that goes sliding along through thickets, only occasionally glistening out into a patch of sun-lit water, just frequent enough to let us keep the general bearing of its course. How Moses came to undertake the leadership of Israel, how David was led to offer himself against the giant, how Caesar came to cross the Rubicon, what made my friend give up his promising career and go into the army for his country, — I can see just enough of these to give me interest in them, an interest, that is, a real place inside such questions, just enough to tempt me always with the desire to know more. The way in which the workings of God's mind are always represented to us in the Bible under the most familiar human representations, — repentance, jealousy, anger, patience, — those affections which must be so different from anything we can conceive of in their mightiness and their purity being identified with and expressed by the feeble human echoes of them of which we do know something, — this is the Bible's effort to give men the same interest in the thoughts of God which they have in the thoughts of one another. It is a part of the same effort of which the Incarnation was the sum and crown.

The book or story or lecture which by sympathetic insight lets us have this interesting view of how some mind is working, is always popular. If any one could perfectly describe how the poorest man in town came to do the simplest of his duties, if he could show how every wheel of motive was toothed and fitted into its task, and make it perfectly clear how each step led to every next one, he would fascinate any audience that listened to him. The books that do it most completely are not the subtle books of casuistry which set out to do it, but the simplest and most earnest books, — those which deal with men in their most earnest, which are always their simplest, moments. · This description applies above all books to the Bible, and the Bible people do open their mental movements to us with a clearness which no other series of characters can rival. We see their thoughts grow; and we see more than we usually can of how the thought involves and necessitates the action. This is a large part of the charm of the Bible for those who have no deepest personal religious interest in it.

There is an illustration of this in the story from which I take this evening's text. Jesus had given a blind man his sight. The Pharisee, associating the man with his Restorer, had made a captious quarrel with him, and finally excommunicated him. Jesus meets him, and it ends by his becoming the worshipping disciple of the Master. Here was a great change, and yet the whole story of it is told in one chapter. Everybody who reads the chapter feels that he knows the whole, understands just how the man became a

Christian. It would not be possible to find a story through which you could more clearly trace the flow of a simple, candid mind from motive to conviction, from fountain to ocean, than we can this man's.

If we can understand it so clearly, it must throw some light upon other religious experiences, — upon the ways in which some other men come to Christ, — which are not so clear; and this is why I want to make it the basis of a few words to-night. What I have to say will belong in part to each of the three speeches in the short dialogue which I read for the text: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is He, that I might believe on Him?" "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Then he worshipped Him.

Jesus said to him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Consider the man's position. He had been blind all his life; he was blind that morning; now, at night, he saw. The wonderful beauty of the world had burst upon him. The greatest luxury of sense that man enjoys was his, and he was revelling in its new-found enjoyment. And he was intensely grateful to the friend who had given it to him. He loved Him and thanked Him with his whole heart. And the blessing had cost him something, and was all the dearer for that. It had cost him his hereditary position in the national synagogue. One must almost be a Jew to know what a sacrifice it was to give that up; but he had been very brave and generous about it. He had stood by his benefactor. When they wanted to make him insult Jesus he had honored Him; and now when

he saw Him coming, his whole heart leaped up with joy. All that he had suffered seemed as nothing. Here was his wonderful friend, and he could thank Him once again. He had found Him. He saw Him with the new, strange, beautiful sight which He Himself had given. And just then Jesus steps in and questions him; not, "Are you glad and grateful?" but "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" It is a new thought, a new view altogether. We can almost see the surprise and bewilderment creep over his glad face. He had been hurrying to thank a friend, and here he was stopped and thrown back to think and answer whether he "believed on the Son of God."

"The Son of God." The name was not wholly strange to him. It had lurked throughout his well-learned national history. Angels in the Old Testament had been called God's sons. Sometimes great, pure, and holy men had recognized their sonship to divinity, or had it recognized by others. That there was a God, and that they were His children, bearing some part of His nature, and loved with His fatherly tenderness, — all this he knew something about; but "The Son of God," — one in whom the hints and best promises of all these others were fulfilled, one who really brought the Deity with Him and stood as Mediator between the Father and the sons everywhere, between the beneficent divine and the needy human, — this bewildered him. It may have fascinated him, and filled him with that strange sort of longing which we all have after our highest dreams of whose reality we have no proof except the intensity with which we wish

that they were true. It may have fascinated him, but it bewildered him first. It was not what he had expected. The ground where he had thought to lay the foundation of his little monument of gratitude had opened to infinite depths, and he must build so much deeper than he had thought. He had it on his lips to thank his friend, and lo! suddenly he was dealing with God and with the infinite relations between God and man.

It is a bewilderment which is always ready to fall, which often does fall, upon the superficialness of our ordinary life. There are always deep truths ready to open beneath us, and great unifying truths which are always waiting to close around and bind into a surprising unity the fragmentary lives we live. For we certainly do live very much in fragments. Our special blessings stand isolated, and are not grasped and gathered into one great pervading consciousness of a blessed life, — of a life brooded over and cared for and trained by God the Blesser. Health is a joy of the senses, a delight of full red blood and strong springy muscles, and a skin that tingles with joy in the cold or basks with joy in the sunshine. It has no strong, sufficient purpose. We are well and strong for nothing. Talent, skill, culture, do their little separate works They have hardly more, in some ways they have less, associations in the unity of a plan of life than the instincts of the brutes. One paints his picture, another builds his house, another wins his fortune, and each achievement stands by itself and leaves the bystander asking, or at least sets the worker himself to asking, as

he looks back on his life, "Well, what of it?" Power, as men get it and use it, is like the play of a crowd of children turned into a great factory and amusing themselves by whirling one this wheel, and one the other, with no single purpose controlling and no single result issuing from the whole. One rules his senate and another his society and another his family and another his club and, with all the power everywhere lavished, the whole goes largely unruled. Is not this the trouble? We live in such small detail. The world unfolds its riches more and more. We are turned loose among them. Blessing — opportunity, which is the great blessing — opens around us on every side; but in the midst of it all we seem to live such a baby-life. We are so like children in their nurseries, who know every toy and bit of furniture perfectly, but know no whole, — have no conception of the purpose of the nursery and its meaning. There are high impulses enough; there are patriotism and courage; men will die for friends and country, — but it all lacks spiritual unity. Where is the centre of it all?

Take any life. A boy has his dozen years of full boy's pleasure, and every day's enjoyment is a sort of rude, healthy, barbaric hymn of how good it is to live. Then comes the young man's education, and that is good too, subtler, finer, more conscious, sweeter. Then comes manhood with its happy cares and incitements. That is good too. Business, public spirit, family life, — the great sum-total of all is a sense of gladness; but how blind it is, how it eddies in circles which come back on themselves, how it seems to lack drift and ten-

dency and direction. How hard it is to think of it all as having been launched from the hand of any deliberate design, or as having an appointed end in any definite result. How easy it is to sit down by the side of the very richest and fullest and most successful life we ever knew, and in certain moods find ourselves saying of it, "Well, what of it after all?" That is not the great first feeling to be sure. The first feeling is a pure delight and thankfulness for our existence and its blessedness, even fragmentarily as we conceive of them; but, because we do conceive of them fragmentarily, that other feeling is always lurking underneath and any little convulsion may throw it any moment to the top.

What can save us? Suppose this. Suppose that. Meaning to thank God for the fulness of your life, — for health, wealth, power, for love, for friendship, for all this beautiful world with all that it is full of, — you are suddenly met with this question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" At first it seems so unmeaning. What does it mean? It means this: Are you glad and grateful for these things as little separate sensations of pleasure? That amounts to nothing. Or are you thankful for them as manifestations of the divine life to yours, as tokens of that fatherhood of God which found its great utterance, including all others, in the Incarnation of His Son? That is everything. No wonder that such a question brings surprise. It is so much more than you expected. It is like the poor Neapolitan peasant who struck his spade into the soil to dig a well, and the spade went through into free space and he had discovered all the hidden wealth of Hercula-

neum. No wonder there is surprise at first; but afterward you see that in the belief in a manifested Son of God, if you could gain it, you would have just the principle of spiritual unity in which your life is wanting, and the lack of which makes so much of its very best so valueless. If you could believe in one great utterance of God, one incarnate word, the manifested pity of God, and the illustrated possibility of man at once, — then, with such a central point, there could be no more fragmentariness anywhere. All must fall into its relation to it, to Him, and so the unity of life show forth. Blessings of every sort are reflections of that great blessing. Powers of every sort are glimpses of that possible manhood which was manifest in Him. Love of every kind is God's love. The centre once set, the circle builds itself. The manifestation of the Son of God, of Christ, gives all other blessings a place and meaning, just as the sun in heaven accounts for and rescues from fragmentariness every little light of the innumerable host which, in every hue and brilliancy, sparkle and flash and glow from every point of our sun-lit world.

This is the importance of the question. "True," you say, "but the eye may enjoy the sparkle of a diamond or the color of a rose even if it does not know that both are borrowed from the sun and belong to it; and so one may delight in many a joy of life without any conscious reference of it to that spiritual purpose of it all which Christ illustrated." I know he may; but on the whole that wearying sense of a lack of unity and purpose must come in; and the pleasure and the culture which come

by spiritual treatments unconsciously experienced are always deepened and richened when one consciously and cordially submits to a training that is clearly understood.

Superficialness and fragmentariness go together. The more profoundly you get into the heart of things the more simple they become, and the more their unity comes out. This question, then, is a demand for more profoundness, and appeals from the surface to the heart of things.

If one could get the ear of modern enterprise and progress, what question would he want to ask of this wonderful giant that is conquering the earth? What but this? "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Ask it of the business that fills our streets, of the science that discovers, of the philosophy that thinks, of the labor that creates, of the invention that devises. Ask it of education which is the atmosphere, and politics which is the electricity, and home-life which is the sunshine of the days men live. Ask it of art, ask it of philanthropy; ask it at the doors of schools and counting-rooms and state-houses and city halls and museums and homes. "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Have you faith in a spiritual purpose behind, under, through and through all that you are doing, — the soul by which it lives? Do you believe in and are you inspired by a pure, clear faith in God's love and in man's destiny as all gathered and summed up in the redemption of the God-Man, Jesus Christ? "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" A strange question for such places; but if they could answer it, what a new life would be in them all!

And then if we could ask the question of separate men in their separate lives. Your blessings are heaped up; your powers tempt and fascinate you; your associations are so many fountains, each pouring in its special joy upon your soul, — tell me, do you believe in the Son of God? Do not turn away and say the question is impertinent, that it means nothing to you. It means this, Is there any controlling present sense of a manifested and ever-manifesting God that gives a unity to your family, your occupation, your pleasure, in the certainty of a divine Fatherhood and Brotherhood. Do you have any understanding of what this means: "He that spared not His own Son but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things," — any understanding such that when "all things" come they are immediately recognized as given in Him, so that they are no longer unaccountable fragments, — these many blessings, — but the pledges of the great spiritual heritage of holiness, of perfect life, which belongs to you as a child, an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ the Son of God? Do you believe in the Son of God like this? If you do, not the bread on your table, not the joy of the sunshine, not your balance in the bank, no blessing is too common or vulgar to fall into its due place in the structural unity of the new life which is faith in Christ. Every gift excites gratitude to Him as the Giver, and grows sacred in its necessary dedication to Him as the Lord.

Our whole thanksgiving is pitched in too low a key; we come with gratitude for opened eyes, and the Saviour meets us with, "Dost thou believe in the Son of

God?" If so, thank God for that faith, for that includes every blessing.

So much of Christ's question. Now what was the man's answer? "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" "I do not know," he seems to say, "I did not mean anything like that; I did not seem to believe, but yet I have not evidently exhausted or fathomed my own thought. There is something below that I have not realized. Perhaps I do believe. At any rate I should like to. The vague notion attracts me. I will believe if I can." "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" The simplicity and frankness, the guilelessness and openness of the man makes us like him more than ever. There is evidently for him a chance, nay, a certainty, that he will be greater, fuller, better than he is.

Some natures are inclusive; some are exclusive. Some men seem to be always asking, "How much can I take in," and some are always asking, "How much can I shut out?" You see it in men's affections. Some men from boyhood up are eager for objects to love. They crave new currents of affection as the ocean craves the rivers. They will love anything or anybody that gives them a chance. They will fasten like vines about any most shapeless thing which will simply stand still and let them. They do not need response. Other men are chary of their love. Their ingenuity seems to run the other way. They will find something in the most perfect character that can release them from the unwelcome duty of admiration and regard. They seem to be always saying,

"Tell me something about him that can lessen my love, that can show me that I need not love him." And so it is in matters of action too. Some minds are quick to find the practicability and usefulness of things, and devise how they can do them; other minds are quick to see the impossibilities and the hindrances of things, and discover why they need not do them. Some men seek tasks, and some men shirk them.

And so it is peculiarly of faith. One man wants to believe; he welcomes evidence. He asks, "Who is He, that I may believe on Him?" Another man seems to dread to believe; he has ingenuity in discovering the flaws of proof. If he asks for more information, it is because he is sure that some objection or discrepancy will appear which will release him from the unwelcome duty of believing. He says, "Show me more of Him, of what He is, and I will surely find some reason why I should not believe Him." We see the two tendencies, all of us, in people that we know. Carried to their extremes, they develop on one side the superstitious and on the other side the sceptical spirit.

Different ages swing to one side or the other. There is one view of our own time which sees in it the embodiment of the sceptical tendency; certainly its critical spirit is very manifest. It asks with a loud voice how it may escape believing. I believe the other spirit, though quiet in its operations, is very active all the while down below. I believe that what passes for the spirit of doubt is very often the spirit of belief misunderstood, sometimes misunderstanding itself; but certainly the tendency to avoid believing unless one is

absolutely forced to it is very strong and very common. Any one can see it.

But speculations on the character of our own time as a whole are good for very little. How is it with us ourselves? Do we not share in this spirit of unwillingness to believe? It is an educated temper which often has become so set in us that we do not recognize it for what it is; we do not know that there is any other temper. But there is another. There is a large healthy hunger after belief which is as different from the morbid appetite of superstition, as health always is different from disease. There are men who want to believe, — who would rather believe than not, — when some great spiritual theory of the universe is offered them to account for its bewilderments and to help its troubles. The secret of their life seems to be this, that they are men deeply impressed with the infiniteness of life. Does that seem vague and transcendental? They are men who are always conscious of the spiritual and unseen underneath the visible and material, — men who are always sure that there is a great region of unknown truth which they ought to know, and who are restless after it. To such men all that they see presupposes things which they do not see.

There comes great happiness to them. That happiness is perfectly hollow unless there is a meaning behind it, unless it tells of intentions somewhere, unless it means love. They know that "Eat, drink, and be merry," is not the end of it all. To love some one who is loving them, that is what they want to do. "Oh, that I could find Him! Oh, that I could find Him!" is

their cry. Great sorrow comes. But to them sorrow cannot rest in broken limbs or lost fortunes. Those again are only symbols. The essential thing lies deeper. The meaning once more must be personal. Some hand — of friend or enemy — hath done this. Whose hand? And immediately the eager eye is searching among spiritual and eternal things. What has God had to do with it all? The sorrow rolls over the soul with stronger forces than its own weight could carry. They are sure they do not know the whole about it. They crave something more to believe.

Or sin comes, great sin, — for to such a mind no sin seems small. What is sin? The broken law, the disordered order, seem but outside things. Somewhere there must be a centre and a source of law, a soul of order. Somewhere there must be one to whom the sinful heart can cry, "Against Thee have I sinned," in the deep satisfaction of confession; to whom it can appeal, "Be merciful to me a sinner," in mighty supplication for forgiveness. Until it finds Him, it carries its load; and no pardon from fellow-man, no repair of consequences can take it off.

So everywhere the nature that is conscious of the infiniteness of life longs to believe in a manifested God. Its whole disposition is toward faith; and then if any glimpse is offered of a Son of God, a manifestation of the Invisible Deity who sends happiness and sorrow and who can forgive sin, there is no tendency to disbelieve, there is the hunger of the heart leaping with fearful hope, there is the stretching out of the arms as when they told Bartimeus, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by;"

and the soul cries out, "Who is He that I may believe on Him."

More than we think, far more, depends upon this first attitude of the whole nature, — upon whether we want to believe or want to disbelieve. To one who wants to disbelieve, objections, difficulties, spring from every page of the Bible, from every word of Christ. To one who finds the forces of this life sufficient, an incarnation, a supernatural salvation is incredible. To one who, looking deeper, knows there must be some infinite force which it has not found yet, — some loving, living force of Emanuel, of God with man, — the Son of God is waiting on the threshold and will immediately come. Christ supposes an element of incompleteness everywhere, making a hungry world, — preparing the whole man not to reject as useless and incredible, but to accept as just what it needs and expects, a mysterious, a supernatural, divine Redemption, preparing the mental nature for faith, and the moral nature for repentance, and the spiritual nature for guidance. To this readiness alone can Christ come. You remember that there were cities where Jesus could do no mighty works because of their unbelief. You remember Jerusalem: "Oh how often would I have gathered thy children together and ye would not."

This seems to me part of what Christ means when He tells us that, "Except we become as little children we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The little children are ready for every revelation that may come to them. This strange new world is very big, is infinite to them; and no force seems too mighty, too infinite to

fill it. You tell them of a Son of God, and it seems most natural to them, — the whole story of Bethlehem and Calvary; they cry, "Who is He that we may believe in Him?" This is what Wordsworth sings in his great ode,—

> "Those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings,
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized,
> High instincts before which our mortal nature
> Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
> —— those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day."

These are what make the little children blessed, these reachings back and down into the darkness for the hand of the God whom they have just left, and whom they still expect, and in whom they easily believe.

Go asking for a Son of God, seeing how life is empty and sad and inexplicable without Him, ready and wanting to believe in Him, and He shall surely come; for He must come to every soul to which He can come. And if He seems to delay His coming, it is only that He may come more deeply and more richly.

How will He come? We go back to our story and read the third speech of the dialogue: "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." The teaching that seems to me to be here for us, is this, — that when Christ "comes," as we say, to a human soul, it is only to the consciousness of the soul that He

is introduced, not to the soul itself; He has been at the doors of that from its very beginning. We lose this out of our Christianity; but really it ought not only to be in our Christianity, it ought to be our Christianity, — this certainty of an ever-present, ever-active Christ. We live in a redeemed world, — a world full of the Holy Ghost forever doing His work, forever taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. That Christ so shown is the most real, most present power in this new Christian world. Men see Him, men talk with Him continually. They do not recognize Him; they do not know what lofty converse they are holding; but some day when, in some of the ways we have been talking of to-night, a man has become really earnest and wants to believe in the Son of God, and is asking, "Who is He that I may believe on Him?" then that Son of God comes to him, — not as a new guest from the lofty heaven, but as the familiar and slighted friend who has waited and watched at the doorstep, who has already from the very first filled the soul's house with such measure of His influence as the soul's obstinacy of indifference would allow, and who now, as He steps in at the soul's eager call to take complete and final possession of its life, does not proclaim His coming in awful, new, unfamiliar words, but says in tones which the soul recognizes and wonders that it has not known long before, "Thou hast seen me. I have talked with thee."

This is Christ's conversion of a soul. "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ from above): or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the

dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To open the eyes and find a Christ beside us, — not to go long journeys to discover a Christ with whom before we have had nothing to do, — this is the Christian conversion.

To this every man who is living the new life at all will bear his witness. How did the Saviour first prove himself to you? Was it not by the past which suddenly or gradually became full of Him, so that you recognized that He had been busy on you when you did not know it, that He had been leading you when you thought you had been wandering, so that you saw your past thoughts grow luminous as His inspirations, your past dreams as the contagions of His presence and the prophecies of His touch? Was not this His answer when you called Him? Not, "I am coming," away off in the distance, but "Here I am," spoken right out of the very soul and centre of your life?

I am not speaking merely of that general, beautiful, wonderful presence of the supernatural in and under and through the natural courses of human life of which all men are more or less aware, and which every now and then breaks forth, — which always gives the great ground swell of mystery to human existence. I do not wish to lose in vagueness the personal, clear, dear Christ. I mean that close to every man from his birth the Redeemer stands by His spirit with the great purposes of His redemption; that He brings those purposes

to bear upon the soul from the very first; and that when a man awakes up to know his need and calls for a Son of God, and then when he opens his eyes and sees the Christ beside him, the dearest part of it all is that it is not a Christ newly come, but the Christ who has cared for him from the beginning, ever since, nay, long before, he was born. "Thou hast both seen me, and it is I that talked with thee."

"Thou hast both seen me." How touching in this special story is the allusion to the light which the Lord had given only that day. Jesus reminds him of the lower mercy that He may assure him of the higher. "Thou hast seen Him with the eyes that I have opened. Let that be a pledge and earnest to thee that I can and will open yet other eyes, and thou shalt see Him more completely, more profoundly, in wonderful new ways." Still, you see, it is as the Saviour of the past life that He offers Himself for the future.

I love to think of this, that where men to-day are most unconscious of His presence, Christ is laying foundations for His future work. Here is a perfectly worldly man who cares nothing for Christ or Christianity, but yet Christ's touches are on him. He is surrounded with blessings; he is pressed upon with sorrows; he is led through apparently meaningless experiences; and all that some day, when he is really moved to cry out for a Son of God, Christ may be able to come to him, not new and strange, but with the strong claim of years of care and thought and unthanked mercy. It makes the world very solemn to think how much of this work Christ must be doing everywhere. It makes our

own lives very sacred to think how much of it He may be doing in us.

There have been great creative moments in the history of the world, as all history and science seem to show, — moments when after long, silent preparations, suddenly the old order broke and a new, as if by magic, came into its place. So it has been in physical and social and political history. But in neither was there any magic. The same force which was in the last changing conviction had been in all the preparation. The flower is but the ripening of the same juices that built the stem. So it is with conversion to the very last. The Christ who in eternity opens the last concealment, and lays His comfort and life close to the deepest needs of the poor, needy, human heart, is the same Christ that first laid hands upon the blind eyes, and made them see the sky and flowers.

It is a wondrous revelation of the Saviour. He comes to us by showing that He has been always with us. He finds the material of the Christian life in us, and builds it by His touch. Does this seem to lessen and depreciate His work? Does it take from its absolute importance? Do you ask what is the fate of the material if it is not used? That He has answered Himself in the Parable of the Talents.

In words full of solemnity, Jesus summed up His whole impression of the story which we have been studying to-night. He declared the critical character which He brought into the world, — that men are tested by how they are affected by Him. How wonderfully deep His words are. "For judgment I am come into the

world, that they which see not might see, and they which see might be made blind."

May we first know how blind we are, and then come to Him for sight, and then out of past mercy always win new trust, and so go on until at last we come unto the perfect Light.

XIII.

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.

Luke, the beloved physician. — Colossians iv. 14.

The eighteenth day of October has long been kept in the Church as the Festival of the Evangelist, Saint Luke. Once every year, upon this day, the Church has chosen to remind us that the third Gospel did not drop down from the stars, and did not spring up out of the earth; but that it was written by a man, and is stamped with his personality; that it is the description of the life of Jesus through a special human medium; and that it is good for us, in our sense of the preciousness of the Gospel, to remember and study and be grateful to the man who wrote it.

No doubt the institution of a Saint Luke's day was meant to be a special commemoration of the evangelist. It is as the author of the Gospel that the Church is mostly interested in Saint Luke. That book is one of the four golden columns on which rest the Christian history. It is one of the four golden trumpets out of which has been blown the summons of Christ to the sons of men. And besides being one of four, it has also its own peculiar character. The reader of the Gospel of Saint Luke, if he has been intelligent and sympathetic, has always felt a sort of human breadth and

richness in it which, in kind at least, was peculiarly its own. It was not so Jewish as the others. The very fact that it is the Gospel in which we have most fully told the story of the Lord's nativity, and in which alone occurs the Parable of the Prodigal Son, is enough to show how well the Church does in commemorating always the man who wrote it.

But it is not only as the writer of the Gospel that we know Saint Luke; and though we shall not forget for a moment, while we speak of him, that he is the writer of the Gospel, it is with reference to what is told us of him in other associations that I want to speak to-day. It is not much. At a certain point in the book of the Acts of the Apostles the writer of the book begins to use the first personal pronoun "we," in telling the story of the missionary journeys. At another certain point he ceases to say "we," and falls back into the use of the third person. The first verse of that same book of Acts identifies its author with the author of the Gospel which bears the name of Luke. Between these two points, then, of which I spoke, Luke was the fellow-traveller and fellow-laborer of Paul who is the central figure of the larger portion of the book. During the time when they were thus together Paul wrote several epistles, among them two from his imprisonment at Rome, — one to the Church of the Colossians, and the other to his young disciple Timothy. In his letter to Timothy he says, "Only Luke is with me." In his letter to the Colossians he uses the expression of my text, — "Luke, the beloved physician." He says, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you!"

That is almost all. By early tradition or by putting together incidental indications we are able to discern that Lucanus, as he was called in Latin, was a Gentile and a citizen of Antioch. All else is vague. Simply there came from among the men of Antioch one — a physician by profession — who travelled on his missionary journeys with Saint Paul, and by and by, before he died, wrote at Saint Paul's suggestion the story of that life of Jesus which lay at the back of all the teaching in which the missionary journeys were engaged.

And yet there is something more; for careful and ingenious study has seemed to make it clear that Luke's character as a physician was a genuine and significant thing, and that it remained a strong and influential fact even after he became a missionary. His style, his choice of words, the special events of Christ's life which he selects for his narration, bear marks of the physician's habits of thought and speech; and an exceedingly ingenious comparison of times has made it curiously appear that Luke on several occasions came to Saint Paul just when the great apostle was most overcome with weakness, or was just recovering from some one of the severe attacks which every now and then broke down his feeble strength. Indeed I think we feel in these words from the letter to the Colossians, "Luke, the beloved physician," that Paul is speaking not merely of one who once had been, but of one who now was in practice of the art of healing. It is a present fact. It is a fact that excites affection. It is as a physician, among other things, that Luke travels with Paul from land to land or shares his long imprisonment at Rome.

Nothing of this same sort, so far as I remember, is true of any of the other of the early converts and missionaries of Christ. Of the professions of some of them we are told nothing; of others of them it would seem as if they left their former occupation and had no more to do with it after they had been converted. Of Luke alone it would appear as if he still continued to do as a Christian the same thing which he had done before he became Christ's disciple. In him alone we see what since his time has been the natural and normal type of Christian life, — the inspiration of a definite old occupation by a new spiritual power, so that it continued to be exercised, and showed its genuine capacity and fulfilled its true ideal.

It is of this feature in the dimly-outlined story of Saint Luke that I wish to speak to you to-day. It suggests, I think, certain thoughts with reference first, to the general relation of the Christian life to men's occupations and professions, and then, to the special profession with which the physician-disciple belonged.

The disposition to find the simplicity of motive under the variety of action is one of the most familiar dispositions of our time. The first man, the savage man, the child, looks at the world and fancies as many forces as he sees moving things. The brook running from the hillside, the branch waving in the breezes, the solemn procession of the stars across the sky, the fire bursting from the mountain's summit, the silent growth of cornfields, and the noisy rush of the tornado, — every one of these to the barbarian is absolutely separate. He fancies a new force for each. He crowns in his imagina-

tion one deity for the forest, and another for the fire, and another for the stream. It is one fruitful source of polytheism. And if, behind his multitude of deities, there sits in his thought some mighty lord over all, it is his only to keep in order a distracted universe, and to curb his quarrelsome divinities that he may preserve some sort of disorderly and fragmentary peace. What is the progress from that first barbarism? What is the maturity which comes out from that childishness of thought? Is it not the suspicion first, and then the certainty, of some few great motive forces lying deep in Nature which at least shall take these multitudinous forms of action and combine them into groups? What is the dream of him who watches this great grouping of the forms of action under the inspiration of a few great forces? Is it not that some day — far hence but certainly some day — these few great forces shall themselves be seen to be but utterances of one great force, vital enough to fill them all with vitality, and the complete simplicity of Nature be attained in the dependence of everything on some one first moving force, — when Nature herself shall become almost a real being standing at the centre of all life, and claiming all action out to the budding of the least flower and the waving of the lightest twig as a direct act of hers?

And now suppose we turn from the world of Nature to the world of human action. Is not the one a parable of the other? Is not the world of human action, like the world of Nature, a scene of endless superficial variety which by and by we learn to gather into unity under the power of some central inspiration? One at his

farm and another at his merchandise, one singing songs, one painting pictures, one pleading causes, one building houses, and one making shoes, — here is this countless diversity of human action. To the first observer that would seem to be everything. Each profession is a life by itself. It will have its own thoughts and standards, its own principles and passions, with which no other profession will have anything in common. So it is in certain crude communities where caste prevails. The caste of the shoemakers and the caste of the cooks have nothing to do with one another.

But that is only the first aspect, — the earliest form of human life. Very soon he who lives begins to feel, and he who watches begins to discover, some deeper forces which are working underneath and giving a real unity to all this seemingly incoherent life. The love of independence, the love of family, the love of fame, — these great elemental desires of humanity are what are making the lawyer plead his case, and the mason lay his blocks of stone. As you walk the streets with this truth in your mind the furious discord begins to deepen and condense itself to music. It sounds in various strains to different men, and to the same man at different times, according as this or that one of the great dispositions of humanity is most dominant in the listener's soul; but it is always rich and deep in proportion to the depths of the motive under which the soul tries to harmonize the discord. The deeper in the mass lies the point which you make your centre, so much the larger will be the portion of the substance of

the mass which can group itself into a sphere around the point which you have chosen.

And so the question will inevitably come into men's minds, How will it be if you can reach one point which is the genuine centre of the whole mass and behind all the other forces which come from part way in can feel one supreme force of which they all are only modifications and exhibitions, issuing from the very heart of all? The dream of physics renews itself in morals. The physicist wonders whether perhaps all these special forces of heat and electricity and all the rest are only forms and phases of some great vital force which man shall some day find, and which, when it is found, shall perfectly account for all that goes on in the world of Nature; so the moralist asks himself whether these partial forces, the love of the exercise of powers, the love of independence, the love of family, the love of fame, may not, if they be carried deep enough, be found to meet in and to issue from one central force, — the love of God, — of which they are the utterances, and in their common belonging to which they may find unity. If this could be, if man's pleasure in the exercise of his powers could be felt as the desire to realize the part of God's nature which has been put forth in him, and the love of independence could seem to be the desire to relate oneself directly to the source of life, and the love of family could become the echo of God's Fatherhood, and the love of fame could be made a seeking for God's glory, — if this could be, would not the unity of life be perfect? Out from one central fountain of force — the soul's love for God as its Father — would flow the power

which would first take form in all the variety of secondary impulses which I have described, and then, at last, create all the endlessly various forms of activity of man; so that everything which man had a right to do at all upon the earth might be ideally done as an expression of it, — this central force, this love of man for God.

Does it not change the aspect and feeling of his work in life, of that which we call his profession, when this which I have pictured as taking place some day universally takes place for any man? That which he has to do first, reaches inward to the heart of things — to the source of life — and finds its deepest motive. Then, that deepest motive reaches outward and becomes the inspiring force and the sufficient cause of what he has to do. If it has a real right to take hold of that deepest motive and say, "I am done because of it," is not the man's profession glorified? Is it not redeemed? If it have drudgery connected with it (and where is the profession which has not?) is not its drudgery enlightened by this impulse from within, by being made part of the working out into utterance of this transcendant force? And is not its real unity with other professions, however absolutely different they may be from it in form, brought out and made vivid in their common relation to the source from which all spring? And, what perhaps is more than all, the man's own life is harmonized; the general and special come to reconciliation. The glory and the detail of living cease to contend with and destroy each other. They begin to help each other. The talk about the way in which life is hindered by

having to get a living is put to silence. These are the things which professional life needs, these three, — the redemption of its drudgery, the establishment of sympathy with other professions, and the harmony of the absolute and universal with the relative and special; and all of these must come when that which a man does in his profession reaches down and lays hold as its motive on the love of God.

And now what is conversion? What was it that came to Luke of Antioch when suddenly or slowly by the preaching of Saint Paul he came to believe in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and all that the Incarnation meant? We have his glowing book to tell us, we have the sweet and loving and triumphant story which he wrote of "all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up." But when we want to crowd it into one great word, I think we turn to what Paul the great apostle wrote — perhaps with Luke sitting by him at the time — to the Galatians: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Paul must have taught Luke the meaning of those words. Luke must have learned to say them of himself. Luke's work in life consisted, in part at least, of the physician's duty. Therefore Luke must have gone among his patients saying, "I do this by the faith of the Son of God." Tell me, when he could say that, was there no holier sacredness in the finger which he laid on the sick man's pulse? Was there no truer sense of sympathy with the men whom he saw on every side of him engaged in other works than his? Was there no calmer sense of recon-

ciliation between the general conception of existence which must have filled a mind like his and his special labor of the hour, no truer mutual understanding between the vast slow-heaving tide and the light waves which ran their races on its broad bosom when the sea of which they both were parts had given itself completely into the power of the great attraction?

This is conversion. Suppose that there is nothing of it in the world to-day. Suppose that not a single man in all the world to-day knows Christ and all the love of God which Christ reveals; yet still the needs of life and the discovered aptitudes of various human creatures have created the professions and the trades, the tasks of life have been distributed and in their different groups, men are engaged in all these well-known occupations, — buying and teaching and digging and building and carving and doctoring, — you know the familiar list. And then suppose that suddenly there is put in at the heart of all this human action, as a totally new thing, the warm fire of the love of God. Suppose it comes in an instant in its full-grown strength. How it will take at once the old chambers and fill them with itself! How it will pour itself forth through the old channels! How they will become transfigured with the fire that will come burning through them! How the old professions, remaining the same things, will be such different things from what they were before! It will be as if you took a group of common men using the common human organs for most ordinary work and poured into each one of them the whole mind of Shakespeare or the whole soul of Saint John. Still the old

physical machinery would be in use; but what words now those lips would speak which used to talk only of markets and of weather! What deeds now those hands would do that used to pull the wires of petty tricks! The professions have no more real character in them than the lips or the hands have. They get all their character, all their glory or disgrace, from the purpose and nature of the men who live in them, and send whatever kind of vitality they may possess into effect through them.

See then what are two at least of the effects that a true conversion (which means nothing less than the filling of the man who is within the profession with an entire sense of the love of God and a profound love of answering gratitude in return) must have upon the professional and technical life, — the life in certain arts and occupations of which the world must necessarily be full.

First, It must purify all the professions. It must reject and, as it were, turn away from each profession everything which is not capable of being filled and inspired with this spirit. So it becomes a judgment for us all. It melts away the dross and leaves the gold. It makes the man, first of all, purely the thing he means to be, without admixture of base and foreign elements which are corruption.

Then, secondly, It makes the professions to be no longer means of separation, but means of sympathy and union between men. My profession is totally different from yours. What then? If we fasten our thoughts upon our diverse methods of activity, the harder each

works in his profession the more our lives are separated each from each. If both of us feel always beating through our diverse methods of activity the common purpose of the love of God, then the harder we work in different ways the more our lives are one. This is the promise of a future in which specialized action shall not merely be consistent with but shall help forward the realized brotherhood of man.

I look abroad upon the men who are gathered here this morning. I know how almost all of you are closely identified with some one among the many occupations and professions which together make up the active life of men. I know that not one of you who is at all thoughtful has failed to feel how this division of labor has its dangers. You have feared corruption, — that is, the loss or overlaying by baser accretions of the pure idea of your work; and you have feared narrowness, — the loss of broad human sympathy in the inevitable provincialness of what you have to do. Where is your safeguard against these things which you fear? Shall you give up the life of your profession and simply be a man at large? That you cannot do; and if you could it would not be good for most men, however it might answer for a few. Probably it would not be good for you. No, not by deserting your profession but by deepening it, by seeking a new life under it, by praying for and never resting satisfied until you find regeneration, — the new life lived by the faith of the Son of God; so only can your life of trade or art or profession be redeemed; so only can it become both for you and for the world a blessed thing. The necessary labors which the

nature of man and his relations to this earth demand, all done by men full of the love of God, and each using to its best the special faculty that is in him, — the world needs no other millennium than that; and that millennium, however far away it looks, is not impossible.

I have spoken at length about professional life in general, and its effect upon the men who live it. Let me say a little, before I close, about the special professional life of Luke, the beloved physician, especially as it is linked to the life of the Apostle Paul. As he and Paul are seen travelling on together over land and sea, those two figures taken together represent in a broad way the total care of man for man. Paul is distinctively a man of the soul, a man of the spiritual life. We know him only in his spiritual labors. If he turns aside to tent-making, it is not for the sake of the tents which he can make, but simply that, earning his own living, he may be in true relations to the men whose souls he wants to save. Luke, on the other hand, is physical. His care is for the body. The two together, then, as we watch their figures, climbing side by side over mountains, sleeping side by side on the decks of little Mediterranean boats, standing side by side in the midst of little groups of hard-won disciples, — may we not say of them that they may be considered as recognizing and representing between them the double nature and the double need of man? Body and soul as man is, the ministry that would redeem him and relieve him must have a word to speak to, and a hand to lay upon,

both soul and body. The two missionaries together make a sort of composite copy of the picture which Saint Matthew gives us of Jesus going "about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of disease among the people."

It is interesting, I think, to see how this belonging together of the two activities was so natural and genuine that they were not satisfied with being represented in two separate men, — each activity keeping its own man to itself, and the total being made up only by combination of the two, — but tried to crowd themselves, as it were, both together into each man of the travelling company of two. Thus Luke the physician was a preacher and a teacher also, as well as Paul; and as they journey together Paul is pondering, and no doubt sometimes discussing with his medical companion those great ideas of the sacredness of the body — the body the temple of the Holy Ghost — and the entire man, body, soul, and spirit, needing to be consecrated to God as one entire sacrifice, which he was always writing in his letters to his churches.

This need of unity in the care for man is always reasserting itself. There is no true care for the body which forgets the soul. There is no true care for the soul which is not mindful of the body. The pressure of psychology on physiology, the wise and learned, also the unwise and ignorant, methods of reaching physical conditions through the change of mental states which are so prominent in the medical practice of to-day, bear witness to the first fact. All the kind of teaching

which a few years ago went by the name of muscular Christianity gives testimony to the second.

It certainly is not aside from the purpose if I beg you to remember how the two ought to go together in your treatment of your own lives. The duty of physical health and the duty of spiritual purity and loftiness are not two duties; they are two parts of one duty,— which is the living of the completest life which it is possible for man to live. And the two parts minister to one another. Be good that you may be well; be well that you may be good. Both of those two injunctions are reasonable, and both are binding on us all. Sometimes on one side come exceptions. Sometimes a man must give up being well in order to be good. Never does an exception come upon the other side. Never is a man at liberty to give up being good in order to be well; but the normal life of man needs to be lived in obedience to both commands. Both Paul and Luke — or rather the whole of Luke and the whole of Paul — must be its masters.

The way in which the care for the body and the care for the soul belong together, the way in which Luke and Paul have the same work to do, is indicated perhaps by the similarity of the vices to which both ministries are liable. Theology and medicine, the minister and the doctor, make the same mistakes. Both of them are liable to lose sight of their ends in their means, and to elaborate their systems with a cruel heartlessness, forgetting for the moment the purposes of mercy which are their warrant for existence. Thus theology has driven human souls into exquisite agony with its

cold dissection of the most sacred feelings; and medicine has tortured sensitive animals in a recklessness of scientific vivisection which has no relation, direct or indirect, to human good. Again both ministries to man have been misled from time to time into a sacrifice of the plain and primary obligations of truthfulness to what the minister or doctor has dared to think a higher obligation. That which with more or less of justice has been called Jesuitism in religion on the one side, and on the other side the physician's perversion or denial of the simple truth at the bed-side of his patient, — both of these moral wrongs, both of these indefensible sins, bear close relation to the sense of the sacredness of his trust which is in the heart of the modern Paul or Luke. And yet again, the narrowness of both, the stout and obstinate guard over their orthodoxy, the unwillingness that the work they loved should be done in any but the way that they approved, the anger with irregular practitioners, — who shall say which, the minister or the doctor, has borne the palm in these?

But if these close-united ministries share the same vices, and so prove that they are one, what a far richer testimony to their oneness lies in the virtues which they have in common. I have said this morning that every honest occupation was to be considered as a channel of utterance for the divine life in the character and soul of the man who exercised it; but while this is true of all professions, there is still a difference in the degree of readiness and fulness with which different professions may give utterance to the inner fire. In some the crust of technical methods is more transpa-

rent than in others. In some the volcano torch, out of which the inner fire is to blaze, is held up supremely high. May we not say this of the two works which we are to-day taking Paul and Luke to represent: that, first, they above all others demand, as of fundamental importance, character in the men who do them; and that, second, the element of merciful feeling and readiness for self-sacrifice which are incidental to most other occupations are essential and indispensable in these two? These are what really mark how divine they are, and how they belong together. Neither of them can prosper with any true prosperity save in the hands of a man of goodness and of strength; and in both of them the fountain of pity is the only source of pure and unfailing life. I add to this that both live constantly in the immediate presence of awful and mysterious forces; that both are always, while they see before them human need, feeling behind them that which, call it by what name they will, is Divine Power — is God; and so are always pressed on by the demand for reverence and piety.

I add again that while each has its immediate appeal to make to terror and the fear of pain, the ultimate address of each must be to ardent courage and enthusiastic hope. I put all these together and then the figures of Paul and Luke walking together through history as the ministers of Christ, — the images of theology and medicine laboring in harmony for the redemption of man, for the saving of body, soul, and spirit, — become very sacred and impressive. May their fellowship become more generous and hearty as the years go on!

May each gain greater honor for the other, and both become more humbly and transparently the ministers of Christ! Thus may the two together, working as if they were but one, grow to be more and more a worthy channel through which the helpfulness of God may flow forth to the neediness of man.

XIV.

DEEP CALLING UNTO DEEP.

Deep calleth unto deep. — Psalm xlii. 7.

In one of the most spiritual of David's Psalms there come, almost incidentally as it were, the most striking pictures of external Nature. He begins by singing, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God." Then he goes on to that profound remonstrance with his own oppressed and melancholy heart. "Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul? Why art thou so disquieted within me?" And then comes his great appeal to God in Nature, — "Therefore will I remember Thee concerning the land of Jordan and the little hill of Hermon. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts." It is partly a recollection of the causes of his gratitude. It is a remembrance of how Jordan and Hermon had witnessed God's goodness to him; but it is also the effort to lose his own spiritual vexations in the vastness and majesty of the scenes and the phenomena of natural life. He would put his own personal woe where the billows and the tides are sweeping and beating across one another, and make it sensible in their movement of the larger world of which it is a part, and in whose whole there is peace.

This is the way in which David's descriptions of Nature come about. He is no word-painter depicting the beautiful majestic world for the mere pleasure of the exercise of his literary skill. It is all a spiritual experience. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." It is God and peace and holiness which his soul is seeking when he climbs the mountain, or stands under the starry heavens, or is tossed on the tumult of the resistless sea.

We all know something of what was in the great man's heart. We have all taken a sorrow or a perplexity out into the noontide or the midnight and felt its morbid bitterness drawn out of it, and a great peace descend and fill it from the depth of the majesty under whose arch we stood. It was not consolation. That can come only through the intelligence and reason, or through personal sympathy and love. The sweet and solemn influence which comes to you out of the noontide or the midnight sky does not take away your pain, but it takes out of it its bitterness. It lifts it to a higher peace. It says, "Be still and wait." It gives the reason power and leave and time to work. It gathers the partial into the embrace of the universal. It fills the little with the large. Without mockery or scorn it reminds the small that it is small. The atom floating on the surface hears deep calling unto deep below, and forgets its own restlessness and homelessness in listening.

This was what Nature in our Psalm is seen doing for the spiritual life of David. But that is not what I

want to speak about to-day, although I could not help alluding to it as it gives so rich a character to our Psalm.

I want to take now these words by themselves, — "Deep calleth unto deep," — and let them suggest to us some thoughts with regard to man's relation to the world and his true way of living in it, which I hope will not be without their value. "Deep calleth unto deep." It is the profound responsiveness of life which those words utter. If some great natural philosopher were to speak to us, no doubt he could tell us of the way in which even in physical nature what they suggest is true; of how there is no force which does not correspond with other forces, and find the reason of its own existence in its relationship to them. For such a great rich topic as that, I have no fitness. But there is another responsiveness, — the responsiveness of the life of man, the responsiveness of the world and the human nature which inhabits it to one another, which is also worthy of our study. And it is of that that I desire to speak.

How clear they are, and how they call and answer to each other, — the world and man! The world, — this aggregate of conditions and phenomena and events, this multitudinous complexity of things which happen as old habits to which the gray old earth has long been used, and other things which come with sharp and strange surprise and unexpectedness, as if they never had occurred before; the world, — this crowd of circumstances, with a certain subtle spirit and identity and law pervading it; this world, living and yet dead, dead

and yet living, — at one moment a thing of mere material of wood and rock and water, at the next moment a thing all instinct with quickness and vitality; the world on one side, and on the other man, sensitive and eager, ready to respond, often responding even when no one speaks to him, — man who seems sometimes to be only the chief of animals, sprung as it were out of the very substance of the world itself, and then at other times seeming to carry on his forehead the star of a supremacy and an authority almost divine, — this world and this man, behold them standing and looking each other in the face, and listening for one another's words! The world hears the man. It answers him with its obediences. It responds to his advancing character. It holds its resources ready as he grows fit to call for them. But even more sensitively the man hears the world. The mass and crowd of things abound in influences which pour forth and tell upon the human creature's life. Its slightest whisper fills him with emotion and works upon his sensitive will. Almost we can think of the angelic beings which are in the heavens, full of sympathy, bending and listening to this converse between man and his world, between each man and his circumstances, and knowing how it fares with him by the way in which they speak to him and the way in which he answers.

But then, to take another step, when we look somewhat closer at the world and at man, we find this other thing, — that both in the world and in man there are profounder and there are more superficial parts, there are depths and shallows; and that it makes great

and most critical difference which part of the world it is that speaks to which part of the man. The world is deep or shallow. How deep it is! What solemn and perplexing questions come up out of its darknesses! How it is always on the point of vast changes, terrible explosions! How character is always being moulded by the powers which it contains! How souls seem to change their whole nature as they pass through its furnaces! And yet change your point of view and what a shallow thing the world is! How its changes chase one another almost like the idle alternation of joy and sorrow on the face of a child! How much happens in the State and in society, and in the schools, which comes to nothing! What a waving of lights and jingling of bells and playing at hide-and-seek of waves upon the sea a large part of this perpetual activity appears.

And not only the world but man as well is deep or shallow. How deep he is! What struggles may tear the very foundations of his life asunder! On the other hand, what peace which passeth understanding may lie like a great ocean underneath the surface turmoil of his days. How profoundly he can suffer; how profoundly he can enjoy! What rich things are his conscience and his will! And then, all of a sudden, when it seems as if all the universe were in him; when it seems as if he were as high as heaven and as low as hell; when the music of his nature seems to be full of the intensest passion which out-goes expression, — how he will begin, all of a sudden, to chatter like a bird! How nothing is too light for him! How he will play with straws and chase shadows across the fields! How

he will make life a frolic, and refuse to be serious even when the heaviest shadows fill the solemn sky!

Thus both the two, — the world and man, whose converse with each other makes the history and poetry, the comedy and tragedy of this planet whereon we live, — both of them have their depths and their shallows. Each of them is capable of seeming profound and rich and serious or superficial and meagre and trivial. And all this makes their talk with one another, their influence on one another, endlessly interesting and pathetic. It is the noblest and completest form of their intercourse — the intercourse of the world and man — which has seemed to me to be suggested by the words from David's Psalm. When the strongest powers of man are brought out by the greatest exigencies of life; when what a man can do is tested to the very bottom by the most awful or splendid exhibition of what the world can be; when a man stands amazed himself at the patience and courage and resource which comes welling up in his soul at the demand of some great suffering or some great opportunity of his fellow-men, — could there be words which could describe the great scene better than these, "Deep calleth unto deep?"

It may be in the region of thought or in the region of action; it may be a great problem awakening the profoundest intelligence, and saying, "Come, find my solution," or it may be a great task summoning the active powers, and saying, "Come, do me;" it may be in an excitement and a tumult which shakes the nature through and through, or it may be in a serene and open calmness which means more than any tumult.

The form is nothing; the substance of the experience is everything. When the supreme demand of life calls out the supreme capacity of man, then it is that the picture of the waves is fulfilled in spiritual life and "Deep calleth unto deep."

It is a great inspiring spectacle when this is seen taking place in a young man's life. There is a beautiful exhilaration in it. The mysterious world lifts up its voice and asks its old unanswered questions, — problems which have puzzled all the generations which have come and gone, lo! they are not dead. They are still alive. They lift up their undiscouraged voice and ask themselves anew of this new-comer, and he with his audacious heart accepts their challenge. All that is most serious and earnest in him tells him that their answers must be somewhere. His clear eyes question them with hope. Perhaps he can find what all who have gone before have failed to find. So the best which the young man is leaps to wrestle with the hardest which the world can show; so deep answereth to deep.

At the other end of life the same thing comes, only in another way. When the great shadow of the earth lies on the old man's soul, and the light of the life beyond is gathering in the western sky; when wonder deepens and great questions swarm and the supreme problem, "What does it all mean?" stares out at him from all familiar things, — how often then a patience and a faith, a love and trust and spiritual certainty come forth which all the life has been preparing unconsciously; and in the silent days which wait the end, the soul hears the eternity, and "Deep calleth unto deep."

I speak of notable periods which are, as it were, emergencies of life; but I should be sorry to think that this dealing of the deepest part of us with the deepest part of the world were confined to critical occasions and solemn or enthusiastic days. I should be sorry not to think that there are lives in which it is habitual. There are men, not oppressed and gloomy, but serious and happy, whose deepest thought is always busy with the deepest things. Very unhappy is the man who never knows such converse. Happiest of all is he for whom it starts without surprise at any moment, who is always ready to give his deepest thought to deepest questions and his strongest powers to the hardest tasks.

This then is what we mean by deep calling unto deep. You see what kind of life it makes. There is another kind of life by contrast with which this kind may perhaps best be understood. There is a life to which the world seems easy, and so in which the strongest powers of the human nature are not stirred. I call that the life in which shallow calleth unto shallow. Like little pools lying in the rock, none of them more than an inch deep, all of them rippling and twinkling in the sunshine and the breeze, — so lie the small interests of the world and the small powers of man; and they talk with one another, and one perfectly answers the demands which the other makes. Do you not know all that? The world simply as a place of enjoyment summons man simply as a being capable of enjoyment. The whole relationship gets no deeper than that. The material of pleasure or of pride cries to the power of pleasure or

of pride, "Come, be pleased," or "Come, be proud." It is the invitation of the surface to the surface, — of the surface of the world to the surface of the man.

What shall we say of this? It is real. It is legitimate. In its degree and its proportion it is good; but made the whole of life and cut off from connection with the deeper converse between the world and the soul, it is dreadful. The world does say to us, "Enjoy;" and it is good for us to hear her invitation. But for the world to say, and for us to hear, nothing better or deeper than "Enjoy" is to turn the relation between the world and man into something hardly better than that which exists between the corn-field and the crows. It is clothing oneself with cobwebs. Only when the deeper communion, rich and full and strong, is going on below, between the depths of life and the depths of man, — only then is the surface communion healthy and natural and good. He who is always hearing and answering the call of life to be thoughtful and brave and self-sacrificing, — he alone can safely hear the other cry of life, tempting him to be happy and enjoy.

But look! What multitudes of men have ears only for the summons to enjoyment, who never once seem to hear the call to righteousness and self-sacrifice and truth. Look at the devotees of art to whom it is never more than a mere vehicle of pleasure. Look at the slaves of society who never make it their slave by compelling it to make them generous and good. Look at the business-men who never make anything out of their business except money. It is shallow calling unto shallow. It is the tinkling clatter of the lighter

instruments with no deep thunder of the organ down below, and oh, how wearisome it grows!

But there are two other wrong and bad relations between man and the world he lives in, which result of necessity from what we saw, — that both the world and man have their shallows and their depths. I have spoken of deep calling upon deep, which is great and noble; and of shallow calling upon shallow, which is unsatisfactory and weak. The words of David suggest to me also that there is such a thing as deep calling unto shallow, — by which I mean, of course, the profound and sacred interests of life crying out and finding nothing but the slight and foolish and selfish parts of a man ready to reply. There are a host of men who will not leave great themes and tasks alone and be content to live trivially among trivial things. They are too enterprising, too alive for that. You cannot reduce them to mere dilettantes of the galleries, or exquisites of the parlors, or book-keepers of the exchange; they will meddle with the eternities and the profundities. They have perception enough to hear the great questions and see the great tasks; but they have not earnestness and self-control enough to answer them with serious thought and strong endeavor; so they sing their answer to the thunder, which is not satisfied or answered. This is what I mean by deep calling unto shallow.

If you do not understand what I am thinking of, consider what you see in politics. Is there a greater call than that which comes out of the depths of a nation's needs? "Tell me what this means, and that, in my experience. Tell me how I shall get rid of this corrup-

tion and that danger. Tell me how I can best be governed. Help me to self-control." These are the appeals which come out of the nation's heart of hearts. And what is it that they find to cry to? In part, at least, are they not answered back by personal ambitions, by party spirit, by the trickery of selfishness, and by the base love of management? This is the misery of politics, — the disproportion between the interests which are at stake and the men and machineries which deal with them. Those interests need the profoundest thought and the most absolute devotion. In some degree they get it; but how often what they get is only prejudice and passion, — the lightest, least reasonable, most superficial action of our human nature.

If we turn to religion, the same thing is true there as well. What does it mean when out of the profound realities of the soul, of God, of life, of death, of immortality, of duty, there rises to the surface and flaunts itself in the astonished gaze of men — what? The banner of a denominational pride, or the ribbons of a ritualistic decoration, or the rigidities of formal dogma. Listen to what men call a religious discussion. Is this captiousness, this desire to get the advantage of an adversary, this delight in making hits, this passion for machinery, this mixture of the false with the true, — is this the utterance in human speech of the overwhelming dangers, the overwhelming opportunities of the soul of man? The religious newspaper and the religious convention are often the least religious of all the journals and meetings, the least exalted in their spirit, the most sordid and worldly in their tone.

I find the same regarding truth of every kind. Truth and the search for truth are the great food and discipline of human nature. Good is it when a man, sweeping around some sudden corner of his life, sees looming up before him a truth which he has not known before. He has grown used to the old truth; here is another of another kind. How great the moment is!

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken,
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific, — and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise, —
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

In the heart of the finder of the new truth, as in the heart of the discoverer of the new ocean, new chambers open for the new-comer to abide in; new engineries of power leap to life for the new truth to use. All this sometimes. But sometimes also the new truth stirs nothing but new jealousies and vanities. A new law opens out of the complexity of Nature and sometimes — not often, let us be proud to claim — the naturalists stand quarrelling which it was that saw it first. A new view of life, a new religion which is very old, is brought by some disciple of it from his ancient home, and the best use which we can find to make of it is to use it for the attraction and stimulus of our flagging social existence, to discuss it in our æsthetic clubs, and to pretend dilettante conversions to it before we have taken pains to understand what it really means.

Everywhere the deep calls to the shallow, and the shallow answers with its competent and flippant tongue.

It is earnest questions dealt with by unearnest men and in unearnest ways which make a large part of the darkness of the world. "If he would only let it alone," we feel a thousand times when some flippant trifler takes up some solemn theme and turns it easily round and round between his thumb and finger. "Who are these that darken counsel by words without knowledge?" The earnest man to match the earnest question! When he comes how the light breaks! Oh, my dear friends, I beg you listen to no other. When deep calls to deep, when the conscience and the spiritual earnestness of any man — whoever he be — talks with truth, draw near and listen, for you will surely get something; if not great wisdom, from the earnest talker, at least an atmosphere and light in which your own wisdom can work at its best. But when deep calls to shallow, when man deals with great truth in a little spirit and for ends of little selfishness and pride, then turn and go away; for there there is no food or education for your soul.

We have heard the deep calling to the shallow. Now let us turn for a few moments and, with another ear, listen to the shallow calling to the deep. All of our treatment of this imagery will, I am sure, show you what I mean by that. When the mere superficial things of life, which are all legitimate enough in their true places and enlisting their own kind of interest, aspire to lay hold of man's serious anxiety and to enlist his earnest thought, then there is born a sense of disproportion just the opposite of that of which I have been speaking, — a disproportion which seems to be rightly

described as the shallow calling to the deep. If we are offended when eternity calls to men, and men chatter about it as if it were a trifle; so we also ought to be offended when some trifle speaks to them and they look solemn and burdened and anxious over it, and discuss it as if it were a thing of everlasting import. Have you never stood in the midst of the world of fashion and marvelled how it was possible that men and women should care, as those around you seemed to care, about the little conventionalities which made the scenery and problems of its life? Natural enough questions many of them were, necessary, perhaps, that they should be settled one way or the other, but certainly questions to be settled in an instant and forgotten, — questions to be settled with the simplest powers and the least anxious thought. You meet your friend some morning and he wears an anxious face. You can seem to see into the depths of his being, and they all are stirred. You picture to yourself some awful woe which has befallen him. You seem to see him wrestling like Jacob in Peniel for his life. You stop him and ask what is the matter, and his answer tells you of some petty disturbance of the household, or some question of a bargain he has made, — whether it will turn out twenty-five or thirty per cent to his advantage. Are you not vexed with a vexation that is almost a sense of personal grievance? The man has no right to conceive things in such disproportion. A man has no right to give to the tint on his parlor walls that anxiety of thought which belongs only to the justification of the ways of God to man. And why? Mainly, I suppose, because

the man who has expended his highest powers upon the lightest themes has no new, greater seriousness to give to the great problems when they come, and so either avoids them altogether or else, by a strange perversion, turns back and gives them the light consideration which was what he ought to have given to his headache or the color of his walls. Very often the man in whom the shallow calls to the deep is the same man in whom also the deep calls to the shallow.

There is a noble economy of the deepest life. There is a watchful reserve which keeps guard over the powers of profound anxiety and devoted work, and refuses to give them away to any first applicant who comes and asks. Wealth rolls up to the door and says, "Give me your great anxiety;" and you look up and answer, "No, not for you; here is a little half-indifferent desire which is all that you deserve." Popularity comes and says, "Work with all your might for me;" and you reply, "No; you are not of consequence enough for that. Here is a small fragment of energy which you may have, if you want it; but that is all." Even knowledge comes and says, "Give your whole soul to me;" and you must answer once more, "No; great, good, beautiful as you are, you are not worthy of a man's whole soul. There is something in a man so sacred and so precious that he must keep it in reserve till something even greater than the desire of knowledge demands it." But then at last comes One far more majestic than them all, — God comes with his supreme demand for goodness and for character, and then you open the doors of your whole nature and bid your holiest and profoundest devo-

tion to come trooping forth. Now you rejoice that you kept something which you would not give to any lesser lord. Now here is the deep in life which can call to the deep in you and find its answer.

Oh, my dear friends, at least do this. If you are not ready to give your deepest affections, your most utter loyalty to God and Christ, at least refuse to give them to any other master. None but God is worthy of the total offering of man! Keep your sacredest till the most sacred claims. The very fact that you are keeping it unused will tempt its true use constantly, and by and by the King will take and wear the crown which it has been forbidden any less kingly head than His to wear.

I think that there are men to-day who are living in exactly the condition I describe. Unable to find God and believe in Him in such way that they can give themselves to Him, they yet know themselves to be possessed of powers of love and worship and obedience which it is not possible for them to exercise toward any but a God; therefore they hold these powers sacredly unused and wait. They know their lives imperfect; but they will not try, they will not consent, to complete them by restriction or degradation. If part of the great circle is yet wanting, they will hold the gap open and not draw the line in to fulfil a more limited circumference. To all such waiting souls sooner or later the satisfaction must be given.

Thus I have tried to show how the proportions subsist or fail between the world we live in and the human soul. See what the various conditions are. Sometimes deep calls to deep, and man matches the profoundest

exigencies with profound emotions and actions; sometimes shallow calls to shallow, and then there is the surface life of ordinary intercourse and easy carelessness; sometimes deep calls to shallow, and then you see men trifling with eternal things, and playing on the brink of awful truths; sometimes shallow calls to deep, and then the powers which ought to wrestle with the mightiest problems are wasted on the insignificant whims and fancies of the hour.

What is the issue of it all? Does it not sometimes seem as if the struggle of man's history was toward the establishment of the true proportion between man and his world, and as if, when that were reached, every true man and his world would be saved? There is a slow revelation going on by which men are learning that the effort and the purpose must have relation to each other. "Cast not your pearls before swine;" "Render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's;" "This ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone," — those are the words of Christ which teach the lesson of that proportion. He who hears those words cannot waste his soul's strength on trifles, nor can he think that the great prizes of life are to be had without a struggle, a self-denial, and a patient hope.

There are abundant signs in Jesus of how completely that proportion was maintained in His own life. Men came to Him with selfish little questions about the division of inheritances, and He would not waste His time upon them; but Nicodemus came eager for spiritual light, and Christ would sit all night and teach

him. The people at Nazareth wanted to stone Him, and He quietly passed away and left them with their stones in their hands; but the cross demanded Him, and He went up to the terrible experience with a soul consecrated to endure it all, and spared Himself not one blow of the scourge upon the shoulders, and not one piercing of the nails into the hands and feet. He knew what was worth while; and He knew that because He was one with God, the Son of God could not count the great little nor the little great. That was the secret of His perfect life.

If we can live in Him and have His life in us, shall not the spiritual balance and proportion which were His become ours too? If He were really our Master and our Saviour, could it be that we could get so eager and excited over little things? If we were His, could we possibly be wretched over the losing of a little money which we do not need, or be exalted at the sound of a little praise which we know that we only half deserve and that the praisers only half intend? A moment's disappointment, a moment's gratification, and then the ocean would be calm again and quite forgetful of the ripple which disturbed its bosom.

On the other hand, if we were His, could we help giving the anxiety which we refused to everything beside, to spiritual things? When the deep called, must not the deep reply?

My friends, there are things which it is a shame and an absurdity for any earnest man to care about with any serious care; but there are other things about which a man must care or he is no real man. Whether he is

good and honest; whether he is getting more truth and character; whether the world is better for his living; whether he is finding God, — God help us to care for those things with all our hearts. They are the things the care for which brings us into the company of noble souls. They are the things the care for which we never shall out-go; for for those things the souls of men glorified will still care, and talk of them upon the streets of heaven.

XV.

THE WINGS OF THE SERAPHIM.

Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. — Isaiah vi. 2.

In the majestic vision of Isaiah the Lord Jehovah sits upon His throne, and around Him as He sits there stand mighty figures such as do not appear in just the same guise anywhere else in Scripture. Isaiah calls them "the seraphim." They are not angels; they are rather the expressions of the forces of the universe waiting there beside the throne of God. They are titanic beings, in whom is embodied everything of strength and obedience which anywhere, in any of the worlds of God, is doing His will. Since man is the noblest type of obedient power, these majestic seraphim seem to be human in their shape; but, as if farther to express their meaning, there are added to each of them three pairs of wings, whose use and disposition are with particularity described.

It is from what is said about these wings of the seraphim that I want to take my subject for this morning. You can see what right we have to treat the seraphim themselves as types and specimens of strength offering itself obediently to God. And if the highest attitude

of any man's life is to stand waiting for what use God will choose to make of him, then we have a right to seek for something in the fullest life of consecrated manhood — of manhood standing by the throne of God — correspondent to each indication of temper and feeling which Isaiah shows us in the seraphim.

How shall man stand, then, in a world where God sits in the centre on His throne? This is the question for which I seem to find some answer in the picture of the mighty creatures, each with his six wings, — with two of which he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. We gather so many of our impressions of humanity from poor stunted human creatures — poor wingless things who strut or grovel in their insignificance — that it will surely be good if we can turn for once and see the noblest image of consecrated power, and say to ourselves, "This is what man is meant to be. This it is in me to be if I can use all my powers and let God's presence bring out in me all that it really means to be a man."

Each of the three pairs of wings has its own suggestion. Let us look at them each in turn and see how they represent the three qualities which are the conditions of a complete, effective human life.

With the first pair of wings, then, it is said that the living creature, standing before God, "covered his face." There was a glory which it was not his to see. There was a splendor and exuberance of life, a richness of radiance coming from the very central source of all existence which, although to keep close to it and to bathe his being in its abundance was his necessity and

joy, he could not search and examine and understand. There was the incomprehensibleness of God!

We talk about God's incomprehensibleness as if it were a sad necessity; as if, if we could understand God through and through, it would be happier and better for us. The intimation of Isaiah's vision is something different from that. It is the glory of his seraphim that they stand in the presence of a God so great that they can never comprehend Him. His brightness overwhelms them; they cover their faces with their wings, and their hearts are filled with reverence, which is the first of the conditions of complete human life which they represent.

We have only to think of it a moment to become aware how universal a necessity of human life we are naming when we speak of reverence, — meaning by it that homage which we feel for what goes beyond both our imitation and our knowledge, and shrouds itself in mystery. No man does anything well who does not feel the unknown surrounding and pressing upon the known, and who is not therefore aware all the time that what he does has deeper sources and more distant issues than he can comprehend. It is not only a pleasing sentiment, it is a necessary element of power, — this reverence which veils its eyes before something which it may not know. What would you give for the physician who believed that he had mastered all the truth concerning our human bodies and never stood in awe before the mystery of life, the mystery of death? What would you give for the statesman who had no reverence, who made the State a mere machine, and felt

the presence in it of no deep principles too profound for him to understand? What is more dreadful than irreverent art which paints all that it sees because it sees almost nothing, and yet does not dream that there is more to see; which suggests nothing because it suspects nothing profounder than the flimsy tale it tells, and would fain make us all believe that there is no sacredness in woman, nor nobleness in man, nor secret in Nature, nor dignity in life. Irreverence everywhere is blindness and not sight. It is the stare which is bold because it believes in its heart that there is nothing which its insolent intelligence may not fathom, and so which finds only what it looks for, and makes the world as shallow as it ignorantly dreams the world to be.

When I say this, I know, of course, how easily corruptible the faculty of reverence has always proved itself to be. The noblest and finest things are always most capable of corruption. I see the ghosts of all the superstitions rise before me. I see men standing with deliberately blinded eyes, hiding from their inspection things which they ought to examine, living in wilfully chosen delusions which they prefer to the truth. I see all this in history; I see a vast amount of this to-day and yet all the more because of this, I am sure that we ought to assert the necessity of reverence and of the sense of mystery, and of the certainty of the unknown to every life. To make the sentiment of reverence universal would be the truest way to keep it healthy and pure. It must not seem to be the strange prerogative of saints or cranks; it must not seem to be the sign of excep-

tional weakness or exceptional strength; it must be the element in which all lives go on, and which has its own ministry for each. The child must have it, feeling his little actions touch the Infinite as his feet upon the beach delight in the waves out of the boundless sea that strike them. The mechanic must have it, feeling how his commonest tools are ministers of elemental forces, and raise currents in the air that run out instantly beyond his ken. The scientist needs it as he deals with the palpable and material which hangs in the impalpable and spiritual, and cannot be known without the knowledge of the mystery in which it floats. Every true scientist has it; Newton or Tyndal pauses a moment in his description of the intelligible, and some hymn of the unintelligible, some psalm of delight in the unknown, comes bursting from his scientific lips. Every man holds his best knowledge of himself bosomed on an ignorance about himself, — a perception of the mystery of his own life which gives it all its value. You can know nothing which you do not reverence! You can see nothing before which you do not veil your eyes!

But now take one step farther. All of the mystery which surrounds life and pervades life is really one mystery. It is God. Called by His name, taken up into His being, it is filled with graciousness. It is no longer cold and hard; it is all warm and soft and palpitating. It is love. And of this personal mystery of love — of God — it is supremely true that only by reverence, only by the hiding of the eyes, can He be seen. He who thinks to look God full in the face and question

Him about His existence, blinds himself thereby, and cannot see God. He sees something, but what he sees is not God but himself. In Christ Himself there is the perpetual intimation of His ignorance. There is the continual awe of a nature from the perfect knowledge of which the conditions of His human life excluded him. And if He could not know the Father perfectly, while He lived here in the flesh, shall we complain that we cannot? Shall we not rather rejoice in it? Shall it not be a joy to us to feel, around and through the familiar things which we seem perfectly to understand, the wealth and depth of Divinity, out-going all our comprehension?

Sometimes life grows so lonely. The strongest men crave a relationship to things more deep than ordinary intercourses involve. They want something profounder to rest upon, — something which they can reverence as well as love; and then comes God.

> "Call ye life lonely? Oh, the myriad sounds
> Which haunt it, proving how its outer bounds
> Join with eternity, where God abounds!"

Then the sense of something which they cannot know, of some one greater, infinitely greater than themselves surrounds their life, and there is strength and peace, as when the ocean takes the ship in its embrace, as when the rich warm atmosphere enfolds the earth.

But I do not think that we have reached the fulness of Isaiah's description of reverence as one of the great elements of life until we have looked more carefully at the image which he sets before us. He says of the

seraphim not merely that their eyes were covered, but that they were covered with their wings. Now the wings represent the active powers. It is with them that movement is accomplished and change achieved and obedience rendered; so that it seems to me that what the whole image means is this,—that it is with the powers of action and obedience that the powers of insight and knowledge are veiled. The being who rightly approaches God, approaches Him with the powers of obedience held forward; and only through them does the sight of God come to the intelligence which lies behind. The mystery and awfulness of God is a conviction reached through serving Him. The more He is served the more the vastness of His nature is felt. The more obedience, the more reverence. That, I take it, is the meaning of Isaiah's seraphim with their two wings covering their faces.

Behold, what a lofty idea of reverence is here! It is no palsied idleness. The figure which we see is not flung down upon the ground, despairing and dismayed. It stands upon its feet; it is alert and watchful; it is waiting for commandments; it is eager for work; but all the time its work makes it more beautifully, completely, devoutly reverent of Him for whom the work is done. The more work the more reverence. So man grows more mysterious and great to you, oh, servant of mankind, the longer that you work for him. Is it not so? So Nature grows more mysterious to you, oh, naturalist, the longer that you serve her. Is it not so? So God grows more sublime and awful as we labor for Him in the tasks which He has set us. Would you grow rich in reverence? Go work, work, work with all your

strength; so let life deepen around you and display its greatness.

Poor is the age which has not reverence. Men say it sometimes of this age of ours. But just because it is an age of active over-running work, I cannot, I do not believe that it is really so. At least, I feel sure that it cannot be so in the end. Its work may make it at first arrogant and merely trustful of itself. A little work like a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. It may not easily and all at once submit to be obedient; but as it goes deeper and touches more mighty tasks it must come into the presence of the power which is behind all powers, and feel God. Until it does that it may trifle, it may grow profane; but all the time it is on the way to reverence, the highest reverence, — the reverence which comes not by idle contemplation, but by obedient work.

Poor is the soul which has not reverence! You may have many powers and gifts, but if you have not reverence there is a blight upon them all. Only be sure you seek for reverence aright. Not by shutting your eyes to God or any of His truth, but by spreading your wings before your eyes, by putting your active powers in the forefront of your life, by doing your work as deeply, in as true a sense of obedience to God, as possible, so shall you touch the Infinite, and live in a serene and cheerful awe. The veiling of intelligence with obedience shall give it light and not darkness. The reverence which comes in service shall be not paralysis, but strength.

Let us pass on to the second element in Isaiah's image of a strong and consecrated life. With twain of

his wings, he says, each of the seraphim "covered his feet." The covering of the feet represents the covering of the whole body. As the covering of the face means not seeing, the covering of the feet means not being seen. It signifies the hiding of oneself, the self-effacement which belongs to every effective act and every victorious life.

Here is a man entirely carried away by a great enthusiasm. He believes in it with all his soul. His heart and hands are full of it. What is the result? Is it not true that he entirely forgets himself? Whether he is doing himself credit or discredit, whether men are praising him or blaming him, whether the completion of the work will leave him far up the hill of fame or down in the dark valley of obscurity, he literally never thinks of that. He is obliterated. It is as if he did not exist, but the work did itself, and he was only a spirit to rejoice in its success. Some morning the work is done. It is successful; and he is famous and amazed. Another man's work is all filled with self-consciousness. He never loses himself out of it for a moment. It may be a noble self-consciousness. He may be anxious all the time that the work he is doing should make him a better man; but the work is weak just in proportion as he thinks about himself. It is strong just in proportion to his self-forgetfulness.

Is it not so? Consider your own lives. Have you not all had great moments in which you have forgotten yourselves, and do you not recognize in those moments a clearness and simplicity and strength which separates them from all the other moments of your life? There

was a moment when you saw that a great truth was true and accepted it without asking what the consequences of its acceptance to your life might be. There was a moment when you saw a great wrong being done, and resisted it with an impulse which seemed to be born directly out of the heart of the eternal justice and had nothing to do with your personal dispositions, — hardly anything, even, with your personal will. There was a moment when you were in battle; and whether you lived or died was unimportant, but that the citadel should be taken was a necessity. Those are the great moments of your life.

The man who forgets himself in his work has but one thing to think of,—namely, his work. The man who cannot forget himself has two things to think of, — his work and himself. There is the meaning of it all. There is the distraction and the waste. The energy cannot be concentrated and poured in directly on its one result. Who wants to see a governor, whose whole thought might be given to the welfare of the State, forever pulled aside to think how what he proposes to do will affect his popularity, his credit, his chance of being governor again? My friend comes and sits down beside me, and begins to give me his advice. I listen, and his words are wise. I am just catching glimpses of his meaning and seeing how there may be truth in what he tells, when suddenly there breaks out through his talk a lurid flash which spoils it all. The man is thinking of himself. He is trying to be wise. He is remembering how wise he is. He is trying to impress me with his wisdom; and so his power is gone. A

student sits and seeks for truth, but mingled with his search for truth there is a seeking after fame or some position; and truth hides her deepest secrets from a man like him. So everywhere the noblest streams grow muddy with self-consciousness. Only here and there a stream refuses to be muddied; and then, whether it be great or small, a mighty torrent or a silver thread of quiet water, in its forgetfulness of self it flows on to its work, and makes men's hearts joyous and strong. Efface yourselves, efface yourselves; and the only way to do it is to stand in the presence of God, and be so possessed with Him that there shall be no space or time left for the poor intrusion of your own little personality.

Here also, as before, it is possible to follow out the image of Isaiah. Here, as before, it may mean something to us that the feet are not merely covered, but covered with the wings. The wings, we saw, meant the active powers; and so the meaning is that the thought of oneself is to be hidden and lost behind the energy and faithfulness and joy of active work. I may determine that I will not be self-conscious, and my very determination is self-consciousness; but I become obedient to God, and try enthusiastically to do His will, and I forget myself entirely before I know it. It is not because men make so much of their work that their work makes them vain and fills itself with secondary thoughts of their own advantage; it is because they make so little of their work, because they do not lift themselves up to the thought of obedience to God. The effacement of self is not to come by sinking into sleep, but

by being roused into intensest action at the call of God, — by a passionate desire that His will should be done, whether by us or by another. When that is in our soul, we shall do the part of His will which is ours to do, and in our eagerness for the doing of the work forget the worker. Here is the true death of personal ambition, into the higher life of desire for the attainment of results. "Père Jandel is myself without the inconvenience of myself," said Lacordaire when his brother-monk was elevated above himself to the master-generalship of their order. Behind the wings the feet are growing always strong and beautiful. Within the obedience the obedient nature is growing vigorous and fair; but its own growth is not its purpose, and by and by when the obedience is complete, the soul itself most of all is surprised at the unguessed, unhoped-for life which has come to it in its voluntary death.

This is the history of all self-sacrifice, of all the martyrdoms, of all the crosses. This is what is going on in the sick-rooms where souls are learning patience, and on battle-fields where brave young soldiers are fighting for the truth. This is what true life does for true men as the years go on. Work for God somewhere, in some form, takes gradual possession of a man until at last the thought of self, even in its highest interests, has passed away. It seems to be dead, and only wakens into conscious life again when the great salutation greets it at the end, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful. Enter into My joy." Then the wings part, and the uncovered feet walk by the river of the water of life.

One pair of wings remains. After the twain which hid the face of the seraph, and the twain which hid his feet, Isaiah says still, "And with twain did he fly." We have spoken of obedience as the method of reverence, and of obedience as the method of self-effacement; but here there comes the simpler and perhaps the healthier thought of obedience purely and solely for itself, — the absolute joy and privilege of the creature in doing the Creator's will.

> "His state
> Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest."

So sang the poet of divinity. And though he goes on to turn his great truth into consolation of his own affliction, yet in the lines themselves we cannot help feeling a true and simple joy in the great glory of a universe all thrilled and beaten with the wings of hurrying obedience.

To live in such a universe of obedient activity, to feel its movement, to be sensible of its gloriousness, and yet to make no active part of it would be dreadful. Milton felt this, and in his last great line was compelled to pierce down to the deepest truth about the matter, and assert that he too, even in his blindness, had share in the obedience of the untiring worlds.

> "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Here is the deepest reason, here is the reasonable glory of that which is perpetually exalted and belauded in cheap and superficial ways, — the excellence of work, the glory of activity. Many of our familiar human in-

stincts live and act by deeper powers than they know. That which is really the noble, the divine element in the perpetual activity of man is the sympathy of the obedient universe. The circling stars, the flowing rivers, the growing trees, the whirling atoms, the rushing winds, — all things are in obedient action, doing the will of God. It is the healthy impulse of any true man who finds himself in this active world to share in its activity. It is the healthy shame of any true man to find himself left out, having no part in that obedience which keeps all life alive.

This is the power of the flying wings, — the simple glory of active obedience to God. Somewhere, in some sphere, to do some part of the Eternal Will, to bear some message, to fulfil some task, — no human being can be complete, no human being can be satisfied without that. You may have the face-covering wings and hide your eyes behind them, — that is, you may be full of reverence; you may feel most overwhelmingly the majesty of God; you may stand all day in the most sacred place, crying, "Holy, holy, holy," through the clouds of incense all day long. You may have the feet-covering wings; you may efface yourself; you may tear out the last roots of vanity from your life; you may mortify your pride; you may even deny facts in your eager depreciation of yourself; but reverence and self-effacement come to nothing unless the spirit of active obedience fills the life.

I think this appears to be ever more and more critically true. If a man wants to do God's will, there can be no misbelief in him so dangerous as to be his ruin,

there can be no prison of false sentiment or feeling in him that is not already being cast out. It is not that belief is unimportant. God forbid! Belief is of the very substance of the life. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is not that false feelings, pride, and self-consciousness are insignificant. They are the soul's corruption and paralysis. But it is that through active service, through the will to do God's will, belief is ever struggling to become true, and feeling is ever struggling to grow healthy. No man is fool enough to think that an active arm and a big muscle can be a substitute for a slow beating heart or a torpid brain. It is to set the dull brain thinking and the slow blood running that you take your exercise. Not as a substitute for doctrine or for love, but as a means of both, the Christian says, "O Lord, what shall I do?" And so his act of service has in it all the richness of faith not yet believed, and love not yet kindled into consciousness.

There are two extremes of error. In the one, action is disparaged. The man says, "Not what I do but what I am is of significance. It is not action. It is character." The result is that character itself fades away out of the inactive life. In the other extreme, action is made everything. The glory of mere work is sung in every sort of tune. Just to be busy seems the sufficient accomplishment of life. The result is that work loses its dignity, and the industrious man becomes a clattering machine. Is it not just here that the vision of the wings comes in? Activity in obedience to God. Work done for Him and His eternal purposes. Duty conscious of Him and forgetful of the doer's self, and so

enthusiastic, spontaneous, — there is the field where character is grown, there is at once the cultivation of the worker's soul and the building of some corner of the Kingdom of God.

Oh, my young friends, listen to the great modern Gospel of Work which comes to you on every breeze, but do not let it be to you the shallow, superficial story that it is to many modern ears. Work is everything or work is nothing according to the lord we work for. Work for God. Let yourself do no work which you cannot hold up in His sight and say, "Lord, this is Thine!" and then your work indeed is noble. Then you are standing with your flying wings which will assuredly bear you into fuller light as they carry some work of God toward its fulfilment.

These then are the three, — reverence and self-forgetfulness and active obedience, — "With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." It is because of irreverence and self-conceit and idleness that our lives are weak. Go stand in the sight of God and these wings of salvation shall come and clothe your life. They perfectly clothed the life of Jesus. Reverence and self-sacrifice and obedience were perfect in Him. In the most overwhelmed moments of His life, — crushed in the garden, agonized upon the cross, — he was really standing, like the strong seraphim, at the right hand of God.

You want to be strong. Oh, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, — strong as He

was by reverence and self-surrender and obedience. The opportunity for that strength is open to every man who bears a soul within him, and over whom is God, and around whom is the world all full of duty and need!

XVI.

THE PLANTER AND THE RAIN.

He planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. — Isaiah xliv. 14.

The Prophet is telling us how men make idols. He pictures the whole process. He describes the planting of a tree upon the hill-side, its growth into full size and strength, its being cut down and made into fuel, the comfort which it gives its owner as it burns upon the hearth, and then how "the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image." What is on the Prophet's mind is the indiscriminateness, the lack of separateness and sanctity in that which is put to sacred uses. It is but the refuse and residue of ordinary life that is given to religion. We will not try to follow the Prophet in this line of his thought to-day; rather let us dwell on one idea which is incidentally suggested by what he says. In the course of his story he depicts the growing of a tree. "He planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it." It is the same thing going on long ago in old Judea which has gone on since man began to live upon the earth, which is going on everywhere to-day. The civilized and cultivated tree is the joint product of human care and the earth's fertility. Man puts the seed into the ground, and then the ground, made fruitful by rain and sunshine, does the rest. Man has the initia-

tive, but he does not follow out what he begins to its fulfilment. It is taken out of his hands. The great machinery of Nature appropriates it, and by and by the full-grown product does not belong alone to him or to Nature, but is the work of both together, — of his designing and of Nature's execution. "He planted the ash, and the rain did nourish it."

The words have in them that, I think, which immediately harmonizes with the large and general feeling which we all have about the way in which things grow in the world. Partly by deliberate choice, and partly by what seems to be automatic action; partly by man giving orders to Nature, and partly by Nature carrying out the suggestions of man; partly by human will, and partly by natural force, — so it appears to us as if the operations of the world went on. Sometimes one element and sometimes the other seems most prominent, according to the observer's general nature or special mood. But, behold! here is a recognition of them both, and a blending of the two. Here is man the deviser, the conceiver, and here is the great system of the universe taking his devise or conception at his hands and carrying it forward to its full development. Let us study the picture which is thus set before us, and see how true it is to what the world contains.

We may ask ourselves how it is that any institution or established form of human living comes to be prevalent and dominant. We cannot often — perhaps we can almost never — trace the process, but we know what it must be. A strong idea, of freedom, of justice, of mercy, enters into some strong man's soul. It makes

itself completely his. Then it will not be satisfied with him; it grows restless within him and demands the world. Then he takes it out some day and plants it. With some vigorous, incisive word or deed he thrusts his live and fiery idea down deep into the fruitful soil of human life. Then human life takes up his idea and nourishes it. Wonderfully all the forces gather around it and give it their vitality. History bears witness that it has all been living by the power of that idea unknown, unguessed; philosophy says that in it lies the key of her hard problems; economy discovers that by it life may be made more thrifty and complete; poetry shows its nobleness; affection wreaths it with love; all the essential hopes and fears and needs of human nature come flocking to it; until at last you can no more conceive of human life without that idea than you can think with complacency of the landscape without the great tree which is as thoroughly a part of it as is the very ground itself. A free church, a just court, a popular government, — this is the way in which every institution comes to be. It is the thought of a man set into the great system of human life, claimed by that system, fed by it, becoming so thoroughly the possession of that system that it quite forgets the mind in which it first sprang, but yet being through all its long perpetual life the result of both, — of the hand that planted it, and of the elements which fed it into its full result — the ash-tree which the man planted, and the rain nourished.

Here is the relation of the world's few great creative men to the great mass and body of its life. Helpless

would the great general humanity be without their pregnant thoughts; helpless would they be for all their pregnant thoughts without the great general humanity in which to plant them. Helpless Europe without Martin Luther. Helpless also Martin Luther without Europe. The idea may be the richest and the truest; without the human heart to plant it in, it comes to nothing. The human heart may be tumultuous with fructifying power; if it have no idea to work upon, it tears itself to pieces with its purposeless fermentation. Here is the mutual need of great souls and the great world. Here is where they must learn to respect and to be thankful for each other. Here must be their escape from all grudges and jealousies and weak contempt.

This may serve for our first illustration of the truth we have to study. We have another, even more striking, close at our hand in the way in which character grows up in our personal nature. Where do our characters come from? It is easy sometimes to represent them as the result of strong influence which other men have had over us. It is easy at other times to think of them as if they made themselves, shaping themselves by mere internal fermentation into the result we see. But neither account tells the story by itself. We know that it does not. When we question ourselves, not about character in general, but about special points and qualities of character, then we are sure that it was by some outer influence made our own, some seed of motive or example set into our lives and then taken possession of by those lives and filled with their vitality,

developed into their own type and kind of vice or virtue — it was thus that this which is now so intimate that we call it not merely ours but ourselves came into being. This is the reason of the perpetual identity along with the perpetual variety of goodness and badness. We are all good and bad alike; and yet every man is good and bad in a way all his own, — in a way in which no other man has ever been bad or good since the world began, — just as all ash-trees are alike because they have all been planted from the same nurseries; and yet every ash-tree is different from every other because it has grown in its own soil and fed on its own rain: the society and the individuality of moral life.

Of course what I am saying is true both of the evil and of the good which is in us. It is true of the evil. Here is the bad man. Here is the thief. How did he grow bad? How is he bad to-day? He cheats himself if he tries to believe that he is bad because of a constant outside influence which holds him every moment, and thinks that if that influence were taken off he instantly would flee to goodness. The evil in him is vastly more his own, more himself, than that; and yet it did come into him from without. He did not invent robbery. The temptation dropped in through the open channel of the eye or ear; but, once in, it became his. It became he. His nature seized it; his passions colored it; it turned its growth in the direction of his ambitions. How harmless the temptation without him! How innocent he but for the temptation!

Or is it goodness and not evil? Still the same thing

is true. You have absolutely forgotten what suggestion it was which first brought to your thought the idea of self-conquest, or of knowledge, or of charity, which is now your very life of life. Was there ever a time when you were destitute of it? Is it possible that other people have it too, this which is so especially and absolutely your own? How far away seems the time, as your strained memory recovers it, when some dear hand dropped into your soft, young life the seed which has grown richly into this! The lips which spoke the word which was the New Word of your life have withered beneath the tombstone long ago. The father or the mother who said to you, "Be brave, be true," have gone on themselves deep into the courage and truth of eternity. But what then? Does the harvest-field remember the bright morning when the sower walked in the brown furrows and scattered the seed? It is not what stays in our memories, but what has passed into our characters that is the possession of our lives. The long-forgotten deed or word was caught up into your life. Everything in you was different because of it. And here it is in you to-day; not a seed any longer but a tree, not an influence but a character, yet carrying in itself forever the virtue of its double history, — that it came into the nature and that it became the nature; for we are parts of the great whole, and we are wholes ourselves.

So it is that men become good or bad. Such is the germ-theory of character. So credit and blame are intricately interwoven and shared between our circumstances and ourselves; and yet it must not be forgotten

to be said, this does not make our natures indiscriminate. It is not true that they lie waiting equally indifferent and ready to give growth to the evil and the good. The truth above all others which Christ came to declare was that the human nature had its preference; that it preferred the good, and gave its best fostering to that. Forced to bestow its growth-power on the evil if the evil was forced upon it, it felt that to be a violence. It lived in slavery while it did that. It hated the work it had to do, for its real nature was to serve the good. It struggled to cast out and to refuse the evil. It was to claim that for it and to tempt it to do that that Jesus came. That refusal of the power of growth to strengthen and vivify the bad was complete in Him. Only the good that came to Him commanded His strength. And ever our nature struggles more and more to be what His was and is, who was and is the perfect man!

The truth which I am preaching has its clearest illustration, it may be, in the way in which God has sent into the world the Gospel of His Son. Most sharp and clear and definite stands out in history the life and death of Jesus Christ. The skies are broken at one special point. The print of the divine footstep is on one special spot of earth. The Son of Man comes at one special date, which thenceforth shines supremely luminous among the years. It was the entrance of a new, divine force into the world. But what has been the story of that force once introduced? You have only to read the history of Christendom and you will see. It has been subjected to the influences which

have created the ordinary currents of human life. The characters and thoughts of men have told upon it. The Gospel has shared in the fortunes of the Christian world. It has followed in the track of conquering armies; it has been beaten back and hindered by the tempests of revolution and misrule; it has been tossed upon the waves of philosphical speculation; it has been made the plaything or the tool of politics; it has taken possession of countries and centuries only by taking possession of men through the natural affections of their human hearts; it has worked through institutions which it only helped to create. While it has helped to make the world, it has also at every moment been made by the world into something different from its own pure self. It has been carried forward on the tide of human progress to which it was always itself giving its greatest force and volume. A divine gift to the world, then when once given made in large degree subject to the nurturing conditions of the world to which it had been given — what but this has been the Gospel of God's grace? Is not its story told in the words of this old parable? "He planteth an ash, and then the rain doth nourish it."

If you try to take either half of the truth by itself, you get into the midst of puzzle and mistake. Think of the Gospel simply as an intrusion of divine force kept apart from any mixture with the influences of the world, and it is impossible to understand the forms in which it has been allowed to present itself. Its weaknesses and its strength are alike unintelligible. Think of it as a mere development of human life, and you cannot

conceive how it came to exist at all. But consider it in its completeness. Remember that it is a divine force working through human conditions; see it flowing through the deep channels of the universal human needs; hear it summoning to its standard the eternal human hopes and fears; let it be all one long incarnation, God manifest in the flesh, — a true God, with the real strength of Godhood manifest in a true flesh, cumbered by its hindrances and at the same time made utterable through its sympathies, — and then you see at once why it is so weak, and why it is so strong; why it has not occupied the world with one lightning flash of power, and why it must at last, however slowly, accomplish its complete salvation.

Oh, wondrous tree, whose seed came surely from the hand of God, whose growth has never passed out of His watchful care, which He has set here in this rich, wayward, tumultuous soil of human life, how hast thou wrestled for existence with this bounteous yet reluctant ground, how hast thou sent thy roots into the pierced heart of man's affections! Through what dark stormy nights hast thou struggled with the winds, and grown strong in wrestling! How hast thou drawn up into thyself what is eternal and spiritual in man and made it claim its kinship to divinity! Oh, wondrous tree! oh, Christian faith! oh, Christian Church! so small, so strong! what would the world be without thee? What wouldst thou be without the world? Grow on till in thy life the perfect union of the earth and heaven, of God and man, shall be complete!

Every Christian is a little Christendom; and the

method of the entrance of the Gospel into the great world is repeated in the way in which the Gospel enters into every soul, which then it occupies and changes. Again there is the special act of the implanting of the new life, and then there is the intrusting of the new-implanted life to the nature and its circumstances. Do you remember, oh, my Christian friend! Perhaps the place has perished from the earth; perhaps the fire has swept the stately church away in which the Lord first came and spoke the word which woke you from your lethargy; perhaps there is a well-remembered chamber in some house here in the city where strangers have long lived, whose threshold you have not crossed nor had the right to cross for years, but into which your memory at any instant may go back and see, almost visible, the figure of the Saviour who stood there on one unforgotten night and said to you, "You are mine;" perhaps it is a silent wilderness; perhaps it is the corner of a crowded street which you can never pass without the old mysterious wonder growing into reality again. There Christ came to you! There the descent from heaven silently took place, and the seed was in the soul; then was a new miracle of grace. The man was born again!

Since then long years have come and gone. What have they seen? The rain has nourished it,—that long-sown seed! Nothing has happened since which has not touched that seed and helped or hindered its maturity. Your child's death twenty years ago, your failure, your success in business, the fame you won by some brilliant action, the book you wrote, the cause you argued, the long journey which you made, the friend you won or lost;

and things more silent, more subtle, less evident and notable: your growing older, your changing thought of life, the philosophical idea which took you captive; and, deeper still, the slow and steady operation of your essential nature, of the man that you intrinsically were, the being of your being, — all of these have held the new life in their grasp. They all have poured in upon it their vitality. They have made it a different thing from any other Christian life in all the Church. They have nourished it; they have colored and shaped it; and to-day you are the Christian which these two together — the historical conversion and the continuous experience — have created. What shall we say that God has done for you? Shall not our parable still tell the story? "He has planted an ash, and the rain has nourished it."

Still, remember, it is His rain. The influences into whose influence the seed was given still were God's. He took the child, and gave the friend, and sent you on the journey, and shaped the nature which bestowed on the Christian life its distinctive character. It is not a discrimination between what God does and what you do. God forbid! It is not that! God is behind and in it all; but it is the perception of two parts of His working, — one in which He comes directly from the heavens; the other in which, through your essential sonship to Himself, He ripens the seed which He implanted to its full result. It is all He. He is all and in all.

How beautiful it is! Oh, Christian, lose not either portion of the perfect whole, — not the divine historic access of the deeper life, not the subjection of the total nature, the total experience, to the perfection of that

divine access by assured possession. Stand forth, oh, human souls, and let the light which lighteth every man enter into you all. It seems to enter into all alike. But then, with the new light within you all, go forth, each with his several nature to his several life; and, oh, the myriad glories of the various church, the rainbow splendor of the heaven which slowly builds itself, as in each one life appropriates grace and grace transfigures life, and God becomes yours, and you become God's in the experience of which eternity shall see no end!

These have been more or less clear illustrations and applications of our principle. May we not say that the principle itself includes the whole truth of the supernatural and its relation to the natural? Let me give what time is left to that. What is the picture which the verse of Isaiah sets before our eyes? A group of ash-trees are growing on the hill. We see them stand strong and substantial in the ground. Their roots are drinking in the juices of the earth; their branches catch the winds; the rain descends for their refreshment. We come back to them year after year, and lo! each year they are a little larger than they were the year before. They live and grow, and all their life and growth appears to be the simple outcome of their terrestrial conditions. If we let our questioning run back no farther than the years which we and our fathers can remember, these ash-trees are the creatures of the earth, set fast into its bosom, and with its life abundantly accounting for their lives.

But by and by there comes a man whose questions

will not be content within that limitation. He hears of a time when there were no ash-trees here. He asks behind the method of their growth the method of their origin; and then he learns how one day, long ago, there came a man bringing these ash-trees with him, and planted them, and said to the earth and to the elements, "Here, I give these to you. Take them and nourish them for me." And then, when he has discovered that, the story of the ash-trees is complete. Behind the law of their growth has been set the fact of their planting. Behind the process there is a beginning. Behind the natural forces of their nourishment there is the supernatural will of him who chose that they should be.

And now, let it be not a group of ash-trees but a group of men, — a world-full of men. They too stand rooted in the earth. Soil, winds, and rain, the things of earth, its nourishments and inspirations, are their food and drink. They are what you are, men and women who are listening to me now. The earth is theirs, and they are its. Agnosticism says that that is all which it is possible to know about them. Whence they came, what hand planted them here, it is folly to try to tell. The natural is everything. "The rain doth nourish them." Religion says, "They must have come from somewhere, and calls the Somewhere which they came from God. The lives which the rain nourishes He planted. There is a supernatural. I feel the freer beating of a will."

If we are not agnostics but religious men taught by the voice of God which speaks to us in our souls, then this is the view which we hold about these lives of ours,

my brethren. I will not try, here at a sermon's end, to prove that that view is true. I will only ask you to see how great it is, and beg you to be true to it if you hold it; for the place in which it sets your life, the thing it makes out of your life, is very noble and inspiring. A thought of God intrusted to the world — which, remember, is itself full of God — for its embodiment and execution, — that is what your life is if the religious conception of life is true. Tell me, does the definition as you get hold of it meet and correspond with no double consciousness about yourself within yourself which has puzzled you a thousand times? A thought of God intrusted to the earth for its embodiment and execution! What are these dreams and visions, these upward reachings, these certainties of infinite belongings, these remonstrances with earth as if it were a tyrant holding us in slavery? What are they, oh, thought of God, but the unbroken tension of the chain which binds the thinker to his thought forever? And what are all these earthlinesses, these tender clingings to the things our senses understand, these practical devices, these comfortable limitations, these perceived adaptivenesses, these dreads of the vast universe, these calls of present duties, this fear of dying, this love of the present, warm, domestic earth, — what are they all but the pressure of the school-room on the scholar, of the warm ground upon the seed intrusted to it? The man who does not somehow hold the complete truth about his life — both of these truths combined in one — does not live worthily. The man who has and holds them both, look, what a life he lives! Look how sub-

stantially his roots are fastened in the earth. Look how aspiringly he lifts his branches to the sky.

It is not strange that in the greatest of all human lives, — the life of lives, the life of Jesus, — all this complete truth about the life of man should be most manifest. A thought of God intrusted to the earth for its embodiment and execution! Hear what He says about Himself: "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world." Again, "I leave the world and go unto the Father." "I came forth from the Father!" All the mystery of Nazareth is in those words. All that made that birth to differ from the births of other men as being more immediately the utterance of a thought of God is in these words, "I came forth from the Father." And "I am come into the world." All the distinct work of the thirty-three years, all the development of consciousness by propitious or unpropitious circumstances, all the perfecting by suffering, and finally the cross and its consequences are in those words, "I came into the world." A thought of God's intrusted for its embodiment and execution to the earth; "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us," — that is the Incarnation. And it is in the light of the Incarnation that every man must understand his own life and his brethren's.

His own life and his brethren's, I say; for I am anxious to have you feel that only when we see the supernatural and natural meeting in our brother's life can we be fair to him, or kind to him, or honor him as a fellow-creature ought to be honored, or help him as a fellow-creature ought to be helped. Here are you, set between your brethren who are more fortunate and your

brethren who are less fortunate than you are. On one side of you is the rich and popular man, who can do you a favor. On the other side of you is the poor, obscure man, who wants your favor shown to him. To the one you are tempted to be obsequious, to the other you are tempted to be brutal. Here are you tempted to yield to public opinion on one side, and tempted to despise brave and noble earnestness on the other. Tell me, will it not set you right with both, will it not enable you to keep your respect for yourself before the one man and your respect for him before the other man if you say of each of them as you look him in the face, "This is a thought of God intrusted to the earth for its embodiment and execution"? Two thoughts about each brother-man must swallow up everything beside when you say that to yourself about any fellow-creature, — the thought of the sacredness of his life, and the desire to make the earth to which God has intrusted him as full of helpfulness, as free from hindrance for him as you can. Oh, fathers and mothers, say it of the children in your arms! Oh, students, say it of the men who are your fellow-students! Oh, friends, say it of the friends you love! Oh, enemies, say it of the enemies you dare to hate! Oh, helpers, say it of the poor you help! Oh, suppliants, say it of the rich who help you! Oh, men and women, say it of each other, everywhere! "This is a thought of God intrusted to the earth for its embodiment and execution." And so peace and responsibility and elevation shall take possession of all human intercourse, and the children live together like their Father's children in their Father's house.

Behold, then, here is the issue of it all! We live together between the solemn heaven and the solemn earth. The hand which planted us and the soil in which we are planted — both of them are real, neither of them can be forgotten. God help us to be true to both. God help us to stand in the world with natures opened upward to receive the divinest gifts, with natures opened outward to catch every humblest opportunity which life affords. What were we if we had not come from God? What were we if we had not come into the world? Oh, by the God we came from and by the world into which we have come, let us be men! And to be men is to be images of Christ, the Tree of Life. It is to have the Psalmist's blessing, to be trees planted by the waterside which shall bring forth their fruit in due season. May that blessing come to all of us!

XVII.

NEW EXPERIENCES.

For ye have not passed this way heretofore. — Joshua iii. 4.

It was just before the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan that these words were spoken to them. For three days their camp had been stretched along the low hills which skirt the Jordan, and on this fourth day the officers of Joshua went through their ranks to give them the last commands. They said, "When ye see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then shall ye remove from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore." And Joshua said unto the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." As he spoke the Jews became solemn. Their long journey in the desert was over, and the mystery of an unknown country and an unknown life lay before them. They looked across to where "fair Canaan stood, and Jordan rolled between;" and all their pettier life was hushed, and they grew serious and thoughtful.

It was the impressiveness of a new experience. It was the departure from what was familiar, a long habit of life, and the near entrance upon something new. That always makes men serious when they realize it. A ship's company who have lived together for a few weeks, growing accustomed to their shipboard life, at last draw near the land toward which they have been sailing, and it is always striking to see how a quietness and seriousness seems to come over them in the last hours before they go on shore. New things are waiting for them there. They are going to exchange the familiar for the unfamiliar; so there is little of lightness and much seriousness. And this is the way in which life keeps its solemnity. It is always opening new and unexpected things to us. There is no monotony in living to him who walks even the quietest and tamest paths with open and perceptive eyes. The monotony of life, if life is monotonous to you, is in you, not in the world. It may be that you think all days alike, and grow weary with their sameness, and get none of the stimulus and solemnity which comes from constantly reaching unexpected places and experiences. If it is so, you are very much to be pitied. You cannot think what a different, what a more solemn and delightful, place this world is to a man who goes out every morning into a new world, who is Adam over again every day, who starts each day with the certainty that he "has not passed that way heretofore." The horse in the treadmill does not live a life more different from the horse on the prairies than your life is from such a man's. And if we leave out of account the merely

superficial and unreliable difference of animal spirits, the fundamental difference of the two lives lies in the difference of their perception of God. It is God, and the discovery of Him in life, and the certainty that He has plans for our lives and is doing something with them, that gives us a true, deep sense of movement, and lets us always feel the power and delight of unknown coming things. Without Him a life must sink into weary monotony, or escape it only by artificial and superficial changes.

Let us look to-day at this power of unprecedented things, and try to get some idea of the true way to approach them. And if we think of this story of the Jews we get at the first principle of the matter immediately. What made the seriousness and impressiveness of their entrance into the promised land was the mixture of the new with the old which it brought. The land into which they were to go was new. Never before had their feet trodden the western bank of Jordan. The very unseen bed of the stream itself was to be uncovered that they might pass through. But into this new land they were to be led by the old familiar ark which had led them all the way from Sinai. A new land, new wars to fight, by and by new towns to dwell in, a new life to live, but into it all the old power was to guide them, in it all they were to live by the same old principles and under the same old care. It was this application of the old principles to the new life that gave the seriousness to their position. If there had been nothing of that sort, if they had been going to leave all behind them, and this new world were wholly another world,

where nothing of their old experience should be available, where the ark could not lead them, where God could not keep them, there might have been fright and terror as they prepared to enter; but there would not have been that bright, calm, thoughtful seriousness which burns in the words of Joshua, and seems to glow on the faces of the waiting Hebrews all through the verses of this significant and graphic chapter. They are asking themselves about God. They are wondering what He has in reserve for them. They are gathering up all that they have known of Him. They are pondering how their thoughts of Him will be modified and enlarged in the new experience. The past and the future, like the waves of two great oceans, are meeting in their minds as they stand waiting for the ark to move and the crossing of the Jordan to begin.

And this is the power of every approach to what is unprecedented. It is that we cannot leave behind the old even when we go on into the new. It is that every passage into new and untried things brings out the essential principles under which we are living, unsnarls them from the multitude of accidental things with which they have been entwined, brings out their real character, develops them into their fuller force and clearness. Let us see how this is true in several ways.

Apply it first of all to the changes which are coming all the time in the circumstances of our lives. These changes are either great or small. Their real greatness or smallness depends upon the power which they possess over the principles by which we are living. No change in life is small which really brings into new

shapes the laws and principles which we are living by. The naturalist over his microscope watches with the intensest interest some just perceptible transformation in some obscure part of an animal system, because he sees that the laws of life of that system are working themselves out there in new shapes to new results. Now when a change comes in the circumstances of our lives you will see, I think, if you consider it, that what makes it interesting is that you go into the new condition the same man that you have been, and that some new development of your old character comes out in the newer life. If you go and stand in the midst of London, or climb to the top of the Pyramids, or set yourself in the middle of a snow-field of the Alps, it is a thrilling and delightful experience. What is it that makes it so? It is that you carry your old self there. Some accidental parts of yourself you have left behind in Boston, but your essential self, with your habits and your ways of thinking, you have carried there; and the wonder is to feel this identity of yours standing among these unfamiliar things, beaten by the waves of this strange city life, frowned on by the hoary ages, or lighted by the glory of the everlasting snows. You realize yourself there with a strange and sharp distinctness; and then you feel this identity of yours, without ceasing to be itself, becoming larger for the new things about it, accomplishing its completest thought and life, prophesying for itself destinies, declaring for itself capacities, as it did not do at home. These are the two pleasures of the traveller who has any disposition toward philosophy and self-inspection. The new places

where he goes first bring out his own familiar individuality into clearness, and then ripen it to some finer quality or larger size; but this of course depends upon his carrying his old self there with him. If he did not do that, London and Egypt would be no more to him than they are to the Londoners and the Egyptians who have lived there always; whereas they really are many things to us which they cannot be to them.

And now let it be the going, not from Boston to Egypt, but from wealth to poverty, from poverty to wealth, from health to sickness, from sickness to health, from one business to another business, from one home to another home. The poetry and lesson of it all seems to me to lie in this, that the change of life takes its value from the continuity of life. The change of life first brings out the fact of what you are, and then proceeds to work its changes in that fact. You have been apprehending God after one fashion, from one point of view, while you were a poor man; now, behold! wealth is opening before you. Bright paths unfold themselves all carpeted with flowers. You have not passed that way before. You are going to enter it next week when the fortune drops from the ripe tree into your lap. And when you have entered there, what will really be the significant and interesting fact to yourself and other people? Not certainly that there is one less poor man in the world and one more rich man, — as if the poor man that is gone and the rich man that has come were wholly different beings who had no relation to each other, — but that this rich man was the poor man, that he has come into wealth with the experiences of

his poverty, that he is filling out the idea of God which he got when he was poor, by the new sight of God which he is having inside the walls of gold. Oh, my dear friends, when any of the changes of life draws near to you, whenever God is leading you into new circumstances, clasp with new fervor and strength the old hand which you have long been holding, but prepare to feel it send new meanings to you as it clasps your hand with a larger hold. And since you are always entering into some new life, whether it mark itself by notable outward change or not, always hold the hand of God in grateful memory of past guidance and eager readiness for new, — that is, in love and in faith.

It is by this same principle that we are able to picture to ourselves the natural and healthy way by which men ought to pass from one period or age of life into another. The principle is, that the new and unprecedented is to be entered under the guidance of the old and familiar, the old and familiar being expected to show themselves in altered and larger ways when they have brought us into the new. Evidently such a principle would redeem the fragmentariness of life, and make it one great, growing whole. For there come great breaks in men's spiritual history as men pass from one period of life to another. The worst and the most seemingly irreparable of them all is that one to which apparently people have made up their minds as if it were something that could not be avoided. I mean the break between the child's religion and the man's, — the violent break which comes in later boyhood and earlier youth, when, having ceased to obey mere authority and to believe

what he is taught implicitly, the human creature has not yet attained the faith and life of reason and personal conviction. A young man's life is full of novelty. "You have not passed this way heretofore" seems written upon every fascinating new pathway down which he walks. His freedom is a novelty. His bold beginnings of individual reason are all new. Behind him, with a river rolling between, there lies that despised land in which he was a child, bound to obey what others commanded, and not knowing enough to doubt what others said was true. What shall we say about the progress which the boy seems to have made across the gap that lies between him and his childhood? Shall we not certainly say this, that the progress is natural and healthy and good, that the gap is unnatural and bad? It is right that he who has been a child in leading-strings should rejoice in the conscious power of walking alone. It is wrong that he should cast aside all the culture and strength which he gathered while he was being held and carried, and should insist on counting those years all thrown away. The boy, aware that the years are close upon him when he must act for himself and hold his belief upon his own conviction, is foolish if he does not accept the responsibility, and seek to understand the world and the faith with which he has to deal; but he is no less foolish if in the desire for manliness and originality, he throws away all that has been taught him as a child, and grows contemptuous about it. The true birth of manliness, the true originality of the boy coming to be a man, is seen in him who, taking the faith and discipline of his childhood, makes it his own,

applies it to his own life, finds its peculiar adjustments to his own character. I think there is no better condition of the human nature to contemplate than that of a young man dealing truly and seriously with the faith of his fathers which has been implicitly his childhood's faith. He finds new questions rising which he never dreamed of. He sees new tasks unfolding most perplexingly. The belief in God and Christ which has been vague to him begins to grow clear as his new needs call out new reality from it. As his faith becomes clearer, no doubt it changes in this part or that. The faith which is shaping for his manhood evidently is not to be wholly the same as that in which he was trained. He is to see more of God, he is to see God differently; but the essential thing is this, that it is to be the same God whom he has been seeing, that he is still to see. There is to be no dreadful gap in which, with crude impiety, he rebels against God altogether. It is to be an enlargement of faith as he makes it his own, not a flinging away of faith with a mere possibility of finding it again some day.

This is the meaning of a boy's, or a young man's, confirmation. That is the time in life when confirmation ought to come. Not in mere childhood, when the life is still wholly under other people's influence; not, unless it has been put off by neglect before, in those later years when manhood is an old story, and the nature is hard with long doubt and hesitation; but it ought to come just when the new freedom is beginning to be felt, when obedience to authority is opening into personal responsibility, when the implicit faith is just asking for

its soul of reason, and anticipating the changes which shall make it the peculiar faith of this peculiar life, — then it is that confirmation has its fullest meaning. It is the gathering up of all the faith and dutiful impulse of the past that it may go before the life into the untried fields. All later times for it — though it is good indeed to seize them if the true time has been allowed to slip by — all later times for confirmation are as if the Jews had forgotten the ark when they crossed the Jordan and had to send back for it when they were fighting their hard battles before Jerusalem or Ai. But the boy's confirmation is like the host refusing to cross the river, beyond which lay the untrodden land, unless they saw the ark going through the water first, so that they could follow it.

All this applies indeed to every change from period to period of life. The poetry of all growing life consists in carrying an oldness into a newness, a past into a future, always. So only can our days possibly be bound "each to each by natural piety." I would not for the world think that twenty years hence I should have ceased to see the things which I see now, and love them still. It would make life wearisome beyond expression if I thought that twenty years hence I should see them just as I see them now, and love them with no deeper love because of other visions of their lovableness. And so there comes this deep and simple rule for any man as he crosses the line dividing one period of his life from another, the same rule which he may use also as he passes through any critical occurrence of his life: Make it a time in which you shall realize your

faith, and also in which you shall expect of your faith new and greater things. Take what you believe and are and hold it in your hand with new firmness as you go forward; but as you go, holding it, look on it with continual and confident expectation to see it open into something greater and truer.

No doubt there is something which every critical change in the circumstances of life, or a change from one period of life to another, gives us the chance to cast away and leave behind. No doubt the Israelites left in heaps the accumulated rubbish of their desert journey, — their worn-out clothing and their ragged shoes, — on the eastern bank of Jordan; but they took the ark with them. So let every call that comes to us to enter into new and untried ways be to us the summons to leave our worthless way and foolish sins behind us, but to tighten our hold on truth and goodness, to renew the covenant of our souls with God before we go on where He shall lead us.

I think, again, that the picture of the relation between the old and the new which is seen in our story throws light upon the true method and spirit of all change in religious opinions. The change of one religious opinion for another is, if we think of it, a profoundly serious thing. It is an alteration in our thought of God; and if our thoughts of God are real thoughts, they decide what we are. And so a change in our thought of God must be a change in us. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he," said Solomon. And a different way of thinking in our hearts ought to make us different men. But there is little of this feeling of seriousness very often

in the way in which people say that they change their faith. A light and careless toss from creed to creed seems often to be all that one can see. "I used to be a Unitarian, but now I am a Trinitarian." "I used to think so and so about eternal punishment, but now I have changed my views and think so and so instead." You know how frivolously in the gaps of other talk people say things like these. And there is no community where such words are heard more plentifully than in this community where we live. It is not good. I think that the most stationary bigot, who is what he is for no other reason in the world except that he has been it for so long, is better than this vagrant among the creeds.

But yet there must come changes of religious faith. Men and women do go on, led by God, step by step, until they come where what has seemed to them to be true, seems to them to be true no longer, and something which they once disbelieved has opened to them its soul of truth. Another spiritual prospect opens to them which they never saw before. God is different; the Bible is very different; Christ is profoundly different; and their own natures reveal to them sights which are all strange and unexpected. These are not the people who parade their change of faith. These are not they who, having been noisy partisans of one creed, are heard in a few days among the noisiest of shouters for another. They are people with whom the change has come in silence. In their quiet rooms, in calm and prayerful thought, taking deep hold of them so that they are wholly ready to accept the consequences of their faith and be something different because of the

new belief they hold, in silence that is full of fear and hope, slowly and patiently, so their new view of truth has come to them. But it has come. No longer is there any doubt about its imminence. They stand upon the brink of the thin line that separates them from it. No longer can the full entrance into it be delayed.

There is no sense of newness and inexperience in the world like that. No change of outward circumstances can for a moment match it. "You have not passed this way before" seems to be rung into the soul's ears out of every new application of the new-learnt truth to everything. And then, just then, when all seems new, and we are bewildered and exalted with the opening spiritual prospect, then is the time to call up the Ark of God, which may have fallen in the rear, and to set it clearly in the front. Then, when you are going forth into regions of spiritual thought that are new to you, then you need to put all the honesty and purity and unselfishness of your nature in the van of your life; then you need to review and renew your old covenant with God; then you want to have all your earnestness, all your sense of the value of truth, refreshed in you. Believe me, my dear friends, this is the only salvation of a man who is compelled to change his opinions of religious truth, that in doing it he should become a more spiritual man. If he does not, the change will demoralize him. It is so in the world. A change of creed coming in a frivolous and unspiritual age shakes the whole fabric of religion; but a change of religious thought among men full of religious earnestness is quickening and reviving. Do not let yourself contem-

plate any new view of truth, though you be sure that it is truer than the old, unless you are sure that what leads you to it is a deep desire for holiness and a real love of truth, and a real love of God. Where they lead you, you may freely go, and the land shall be very rich under your feet.

The principle which we have been studying seems to furnish again the law of all more distinctly spiritual life and progress. It furnishes the law of the conversion-time, for there the new and old unite; we pass on into the new under the guidance and assurance of the old. What is it that comes in that day when a man begins the Christian life? Across a resolution which may be hard or easy for him, he sets forth into a new way of living. How often I have tried to tell to you the story of that newness! How many of you have known it well out of your own experience! He who has been living alone begins to live with God. He who has been living for himself begins to live for other men. New motives are open within him; new tasks are spread before him. Old things are passed away; all things are become new. And yet consider! Is not a very large part of the impulse which propels the new life born of the late discovered knowledge of what the life has been before? If you want to make a man a Christian, how shall you begin? Will you tell him of Christ as if then for the first time he and Christ had anything to do with one another? Will you emphasize the moment of the change so strongly that it shall seem as if, before that, as he had cared nothing for the Saviour, the Saviour also had cared nothing for him? No; you will tell him,

if you know your blessed work, of a power which has been in his life from the moment that his life began. You will bid him open his ears and hear the voice of a Saviour who has been always pleading. You will call up, out of the past, signs of God's love which he has never seen, but which have been always there. You will set those signs of a love which has always been, at the head of the progress which is yet to be. You will say, "I beseech you therefore, brother, by the mercies of God that you present your body a living sacrifice to Him." "By all the love which He has shown you when you were most ungrateful now give yourself to Him, and go forward in His service."

Conversion would be something very different from what it is if this were not so. The old life would go for nothing. No motive, no teaching, would come out of it. It would be as if the stream of Jordan were the stream of Lethe, bringing forgetfulness of all the past, and sending out the souls of men upon the other side as if that were the first beginning of their history. But no, take the new Christian and ask him what it means; and all the absorbing interest and hope of his story rests on this: "See what a life I have lived! I have neglected Christ; I have been selfish. I have done my will and not His; I have not even thought about Him all the time; and yet see, He has been loving me all these years. He never has forgotten me. He has been loving me and helping from the beginning. My eyes have just been opened. I have just found it out. Henceforth that late-discovered love will be the power of my life. It will lead me forward into other ways than those

in which I have been walking." And so, as the host of the Israelites stopped by the Jordan's bank before they crossed, until the old ark of the desert had swept through their ranks and taken its true place at their head, the believer's new conviction and hope waits on the brink of the new life till the mercies of the past have swept on to the front, and stand ready to lead into the yet untrodden fields of God.

Such be the new life when it comes to you, my friends! From childhood God has loved you, God has kept you. When you are moved to give yourself to God, let there come out of all that love and keeping one large, strong, deep assurance of God's love. On that love cast yourself and beg forgiveness, and then go forward under its assurance, giving yourself always more and more completely to a God who does not need to give Himself to you because He has been always yours.

All this does not apply only to the one critical experience of the spiritual life which we call conversion; it is true of all spiritual progress. Never let your Christian life disown its past. Let every new and higher consecration and enjoyment into which you enter be made real to you by bringing into it all that Christ has already trained within you of grace and knowledge. I do not like to hear a Christian say of some great enlightenment of his life, "I never knew what Christ was till then. All my Christian life before that was worthless, and goes for nothing." There are Christians who are fond of saying such things. Their experiences are all spasmodic, full of jerks and starts. The probability is that God led you up to that enlightenment by all that went

before. You never could have apprehended that truth or seen that glory of which you make so much, if first He had not led you through the dark and quiet places which you now despise. To the soul which dares believe the vast and precious truth of God's personal love, all life becomes significant, and no past is so dreary that out of it there will not come up some ark of God to lead us to the richer things beyond.

I pass to one more application of our principle on which I must not dwell at length. It concerns our thoughts about the new life which awaits the soul in heaven. We think of the strangeness of that life into which they pass who have done with all the old familiar things of earth. Once, only once, for every man it comes. No feet pass twice down that dim avenue which we call death; so that for every one who passes there, all that he sees is strange and new. This is the wonder, the impressiveness of death, I think. The common road grows tame because the feet have trodden it a hundred times, and the eyes have grown familiar with its scenery until it has ceased to be noted any longer. I think that any road anywhere on the earth over which all men on earth passed once, and through which no man on earth might pass twice, would become solemn and awful to the thoughts of men. So it is of death and all that lies beyond. "We have not passed this way heretofore," men are saying to themselves as they begin to feel their path slope downward to the grave. It is that consciousness which we see coming in their faces when they know that they must die. And beyond death lies the unknown world. "No man hath

seen God at any time," said Jesus; but there the power of the new life is to be that "we shall see Him as He is." It is our privilege to dwell upon the untold, unguessed glory of the world that is to come. It is a poor economy of spiritual motive which tries to make heaven real by taking out of it all thought of inexpressible and new delight, and bringing it down to the tame repetition of the scenes and ways of earth. But no man listens to the talk or reads the books which are often popular, about heaven, without feeling that the glory and delight of which they speak are far too completely separated in kind from any which this world's experience has taught us how to value. It ought not to be so. The highest, truest thought of heaven which man can have is of the full completion of those processes whose beginning he has witnessed here, their completion into degrees of perfectness as yet inconceivable, but still one in kind with what he is aware of now.

Having this thought of heaven, all the deepest life of this world is leading the man toward it. When he goes in there at last, it will be his old life with God that leads him. It will be his long desire to see God which at last introduces him to the sight of God. It will be his long struggle with sin which finally prepares him for the world where he can never sin. Let this be the glory that gathers around your daily experiences, my Christian friends. Poor, weak, homely, commonplace as they may be, they are preparing you for something far greater and more perfect than themselves. Be true in them, learn them down to their depths and they shall open heaven to you some day. The powers and

affection which are training in your family, your business, and your church are to find their eternal occupation along the streets of gold. "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the glory of thy Lord." And so the long life of heaven shall be bound to the short life of earth forever.

It is good then for a man to come to a future which he does not know. It is good for you if God brings you to the borders of some promised land. Do not hesitate at any experience because of its novelty. Do not draw back from any way because you never have passed there before. The truth, the task, the joy, the suffering on whose border you are standing, oh, my friend, to-day, go into it without a fear; only, go into it with God, — the God who has been always with you. Let the past give up to you all the assurance of Him which it contains. Set that assurance of Him before you. Follow that, and the new life to which it leads you shall open its best richness to you; for he who most humbly owns what God has given him and taught him already is surest of the best and deepest blessings and teachings which God has yet to give.

XVIII.

THE PERFECT FAITH.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. — Job xiii. 16.

These words have always seemed to be the expression of the profoundest faith. When David sings, "I will sing unto the Lord because He hath dealt bountifully with me," it seems to be something which all men can understand. It is a gratitude and trust won by visible mercy. But when a soul is able to declare that even under the smiting, ay, even under the slaying, of God it is able still to trust in Him, every one feels that that soul has reached a very true and deep, sometimes it must seem a rare, faith in Him.

And yet it is a degree of faith which we know that men must have attained before they can be in any complete or worthy way believers in God. Merely to trust Him when He is manifestly kind to them, is surely not enough. A man's own soul cannot be satisfied with that. A man questions himself whether that is faith at all; whether it is not merely sight. Everywhere and always any lofty conception of trust has been compelled not to stop short of this: such an entrance into the nature and character of the trusted person that even when he seemed to be unreasonable and disappointing and unkind the faithful soul could trust him still.

Always the man who really wanted to completely trust another man has been obliged to feel that his trust was not complete if it stopped short of that.

They are words that might be said almost in desperation. The soul, compelled to realize that there was no other hope for it, that if this hope failed it every hope was gone, and feeling that it could not live without some hope, might say, "I must and will keep faith in God. No matter how He fails me I will cling to Him still; for I must cling to something still, and there is nothing else to cling to, and so, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." This is the spirit of a familiar hymn which always seemed to me doubtful as the expression of a healthy or even of a possible experience.

> "I can but perish if I go.
> I am resolved to try;
> For if I stay away, I know
> I shall forever die."

It is a question whether a faith as desperate as that is faith at all, but certainly it is not the faith expressed by these words out of our English version of the Book of Job. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." There is something far more cordial about these words. They are not desperate; they anticipate possible disappointment and pain; but they discern a hope beyond them. Their hope lies in the character of God. Whatever His special treatment of the soul may be, the soul knows Him in His character. And for the explanation of His treatment, for the cordial acceptance of His treatment even when it cannot be explained, the soul falls back upon its certainty concerning His character.

There is no desperation here. There is no mere clinging to God because the soul, looking all about, can find nothing else to cling to. All is positive. God is just what the soul needs, and to its certainty of what God is the soul turns in every distress and perplexity about what God does. Behind its perception of God's conduct, as an illumination and as a retreat, always lies its knowledge of God's character.

The relations of character and conduct to each other are always interesting. Let us look at them in general for a few moments. The first and simplest idea of their relation is that conduct is the mouth-piece of character. What a man is declares itself through what he does. I see a man steal, and I know he has a thievish heart. I see a soldier fling himself upon the spears of the enemy, and I know that he is brave and patriotic. We know how closely this relation between character and conduct binds the two together. Each is a poor weak thing without the other. Character without conduct is dumb and paralyzed. Its life is there but it is shut out from action, and all man's history bears witness that it is shut out from growth. Mere qualities which do not become conscious of themselves, and do not make themselves effective by contact with the world of things, lie stagnant, and can hardly be called live qualities at all. And on the other hand, conduct without character is thin and most unsatisfying. The pleasant deed which does not mean a kindly heart behind it, the dashing enterprise which is mere physical excitement, the steadiness in work which is merely mechanical habit and routine, the search for learning which is only curiosity,

— we all know how weary and unsatisfactory all of these become. No; conduct is the trumpet at the lips of character. Character without conduct is like the lips without the trumpet, whose whispers die upon themselves and do not stir the world. Conduct without character is like the trumpet hung up in the wind which whistles through it, and means nothing. The world has a right to demand that all which claims to be character should utter itself through conduct which can be seen and heard. The world has a right to disallow all claims of character which do not utter themselves in conduct. "It may be real, — it may be good," the world has a right to say, "but I cannot know it or test it; and I am sure that however good and real it is, it is deprived of the condition of the best life and growth which is activity."

This is the first relation between character and conduct. Conduct utters and declares character; but we very soon find that this is not their only relation. It is through conduct that I know first what character is. I cannot enter into the knowledge of character in any other way; but when I have once entered into a knowledge of character through my perception of conduct, then something else occurs which it is very interesting and often very beautiful to watch. By and by I come to know character, to which conduct has first introduced me, by itself; and in its turn it becomes the interpreter of other conduct, so that I, who first knew what a man was by what he did, come afterward to understand the things he does by the knowledge of what he is to which I have attained.

Does this seem obscure? But it is what each of you is doing every day. Your life touches another man's life in some of the many varied contacts of the world, — you live beside him, you do business in the same street and watch how he behaves, you see that he does honest deeds, that he resists temptations to dishonesty; by and by when your convictions about his conduct have become very clear, after you have watched him for a long time, you go behind his conduct to his character. You say not merely, "He does honest things;" you say, "The man is honest." You not merely know his acts, you know him. That is a different kind of knowledge. He is more than the aggregate of his acts. He is a nature. To know a nature is an exercise of your faculties different from what it would be to know facts. It involves deeper powers in you, and is a completer action of your life. It is thus that, going on through his honest conduct to his character, you have come to know your friend's honest self. And now suppose he does some act which puzzles you. The world shakes its head at him and calls his act dishonest. You yourself do not see the clew by which to understand it. But suppose you are so sure that he is honest that not even the strange and puzzling circumstances of this act can shake you. You say, "I know that he is honest and so this cannot be a cheat." Such a degree of confidence is possible; in many cases it is perfectly legitimate. Each of you has that degree of confidence in some one of your fellow-men. When such a confidence in character exists, do you not see what a circuit you have made? You began with the observation of conduct which you

could understand; through that, you entered into knowledge of personal character; from knowledge of character you came back to conduct, and accepted actions which you could not understand. You have made this loop, and at the turn of the loop stands character. It is through character that you have passed from the observation of conduct which is perfectly intelligible into the acceptance of conduct which you cannot understand, but of which you know only who and what the man was that did it.

All this is quite familiar. And we can see how necessary some such progress of relation to our fellow-men must be. We can see how limited our life would be if we could never pass through study of their actions into confidence in the characters of the men with whom we have to do. Every man would always be on trial. We should always be testing even our dearest friends. Indeed, there could be no such thing as dear friendship; for friendship implies communion with and confidence in character. We should look at the last act of our companion with whom we had kept company for scores of years with the same suspicious and watchful scrutiny with which we examine the first things which a new acquaintance does. Any one can see how sterile this would make our whole association with our fellow-men. The best that is in any man is locked away until you trust him. When the first scrutiny is over; when you have satisfied yourself that the man whom you are dealing with thinks wisely and means generously; when, having first made his actions a key to his character, you have come to make his character a key to his actions, — then

you begin to get the real benefit of whatever richness and helpfulness of nature there may be in him.

The same is true about every one of the higher associations of mankind. It is true about the association of man with Nature. Man watches Nature at first suspiciously, sees what she does, is ready for any sudden freak or whim or mood; but by and by he comes to know of Nature's uniformity. He understands that she is self-consistent. He sees what she means by all her actions. He is able to state what he calls her laws. That is really an entrance into the character of Nature. Man has come to know not merely what Nature does, but also in some degree what Nature is. And after that, when he interprets every new phenomenon by the established laws, he is only doing by Nature what we have already seen him doing by his fellow-man. He has passed around the loop. Beginning with observed and criticised conduct, he has passed, through sympathy with character, into an acceptance of conduct otherwise wholly mysterious to him.

Or think about a man's relation to any institution to which at last he gives the direction of his life. A man observes the actions of a church, and they so win his confidence that he comes to believe in the church's character as a depositary of divine wisdom and of the spirit of God. When he has once come to that, the church may offer him most unreasonable dogmas and bid him do most unspiritual things and he will not rebel against the utterances of that voice which is to him the very voice of God. Everywhere this circuit marks the course by which man is brought to unquestioning

submission. He starts with the watching of conduct. He goes on into the perception of character, and on the warrant of apprehended character he accepts conduct which in itself bewilders and perplexes him.

And now we want to carry all this over to our thought of God, and see how it supplies the key to that great utterance of faith which is in our text, — "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." It is from God's treatment of any man that that man learns God. What God does to him, that is what first of all he knows of God. "His creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," the tendency, the evident tendency of God's conduct toward him to make him good and happy, — that is the first revelation which he meets. That revelation we can imagine as stopping short with itself, and becoming the whole religion of a man. The man might say, "Yes, I see, the sun is bright. I feel the air is soft and gentle. I recognize that the whole world is tempting me to honesty and industry and purity. God is feeding me, body and soul, and I take His food and thank Him for it." That might be all. The man might get no farther than just that bare acceptance of treatments of God, each one of which, separately taken up and criticised, challenged his approval and made him see that it was good. And evidently, if that were all, if the man had really not gone beyond that, there would be no ground on which the man should, nay none on which he could, accept any treatment of God which appeared to him harsh or unwise. If the air roughened or the sun grew dim, or if the world tempted him to evil instead of enticing him to good, he, holding God

always on trial, judging God anew by each new treatment he received, must of necessity be thrown off from God by each new disappointment. He could not help it. The moment God's conduct went against his judgment, he must disown God.

But suppose the other case. Suppose that the man, behind and through the treatment that God has given him, has seen the character of God. God has been just to him. He has not rested merely in the instances of God's justice, but has risen to the conception that God is just. God has been loving to him. He does not merely recount God's loving acts, but he sees God, and says, "Yes, God is love." He goes up along the conduct to the character. He goes up along the sunlight to the sun. His nature, made to know God's nature, does know Him with immediate apprehension. The acts of God toward him are, as it were, the ushers which open the door and lead us into His presence. When we are once there the ushers may retire. We may forget the special acts of love or justice which first showed us what He was, and live in the direct perception of His character. If that is possible, then evidently we are ready to see each new act which God does toward us with all the illumination of His realized character upon it. Let us be certain that He did it, and we know that it must be just and kind because He is love and justice. Let me know that the water flows directly from the fountain, and it must be pure because the fountain, I know, is purity itself. The taste of corruption which seems to be in the water must really be in me who taste it. God being good cannot do evil. I, standing

where all my experience has brought me, clear in His presence, know that He is good. Therefore, however cruel His deeds may seem, they cannot shake my certainty that He is kind; however unreasonable His deeds may seem, they cannot shake my certainty that He is wise. Therefore, in the tumult and distress of what seems to be the ruin of my life, I can still stand calm and say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

This, then, is our doctrine of man's relation to the conduct and the character of God. Through God's conduct man knows God's character, and then through God's character God's conduct is interpreted. Such a doctrine neither sets man in the miserable and false position of forever judging God by his own poor standards, nor, on the other hand, does it call on man to bow in blindness and accept as good the will of a God of whom he knows nothing because that God has borne no witness of Himself. These are the two dangers of all man's search after God, — one, that man will keep his idea of God forever on test and trial, and never cordially accept Him and enlarge his own life by trusting faith in the life that is greater than his; the other, that man will make a God of his own imagining, and never verify his thought of Him by any reference to the facts of human life. Against both of these dangers the doctrine of man's trust in God which I have tried to state attempts to guard. Man knows God's character by God's conduct, and then interprets God's conduct by God's character. And if to each individual's observation of God's ways you add the observation of the race

in all its generations, which the man who is in true sympathy with humanity may use in large degree as if it were his own, it does appear as if you had a doctrine out of which must come at once intelligence and reverence, — the culture of the watchful eye and of the trustful heart together; the possibility both of David's reasoning, "I will praise Him because He has dealt lovingly with me," and of Job's faith, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

It is interesting to see (as we have already seen to some extent) how this method of faith prevails in all the relations of the human mind to the objects of its trust. There is a possible confidence of soul in soul, won by the experience of the trusted soul's trustiness, which has again and again enabled one human being to say of another, "Though he slay me, I will trust him still." Think of the old story in the Book of Genesis. See Abraham and Isaac — the father and the son — travelling together from the land of the Philistines to the mountain of Moriah, which God had showed to him. Behold the preparations for the sacrifice; hear the boy's artless and pathetic question, "Father, behold the fire and the wood! where is the lamb?" Then see how gradually the boy comes first to suspect and then to know that it is for him that all this preparation has been made. He is to be the victim. There is no word even of remonstrance. Isaac has learned long back to trust his father as one who knew the will of God; and so when now Abraham looks him in the face and says to him, "God wills this, my son," the child's confidence bears the strain and does not falter. "Though

he slay me, yet will I trust him," we can almost hear the boy say as we see him submit to be bound and to be laid upon the wood.

Turn for another instance to a later day in the same Jewish history. Remember how the "daughter of the warrior Gileadite" gave up her youth and hope and life in free acceptance of her father's will. Jephthah, her father, had vowed that he would offer to the Lord whatever first came out to meet him when he returned victorious. We need not sympathize with the reckless folly of the vow in order to feel the beauty of the self-consecration with which his child accepted for herself its dreadful consequences. The poet has unfolded the simple pathos of the Bible story and made us feel the honor for him who by all his loving care had deserved the trust with which the maiden sings from the land that lies beyond the pain of dying, —

> "My God, my land, my father, these did move
> Me from my bliss of life that Nature gave,
> Lowered softly with a threefold cord of love
> Down to a silent grave.
>
> "It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
> That I subdued me to my father's will,
> Because the kiss he gave me e'er I fell
> Sweetens the spirit still."

There is a faith that not merely welcomes the fatal blow but remains even after the blow has done its work. Though He has slain me, yet do I trust Him.

If we turn from sacred to classic story, the same thing is there too, and we see how everywhere human nature loves the spectacle of such unquestioning faith. The

Roman Virginius when his daughter is threatened with insult cries with a voice full of woe and love together, "There is no way but this," and as he smites her, Virginia falls without a word or look except of loving trust. Or, again, we may recall the most pathetic of all the ancient tragedies, in which the gentle daughter of the Grecian leader gives her life to make possible the success of her father's army on its way to Troy. At first there is terrible remonstrance and clinging to this sweet, earthly life; Iphigenia cries, "The light of heaven is sweetest of things for men to behold, but that below is nought; and mad is he who seeks to die. To live dishonorably is better than to die gloriously." But soon her father's terrible conviction takes possession of her. Her faith in him which he has won in all the years of his fatherly kindness does not desert her now; and at the last she is seen standing,— a figure of exalting light and triumph and beauty, by his side, waiting to be sacrificed. "Oh, father, I am here for thee, and I willingly give my body on behalf of my country and of the whole land of Greece, that leading it to the altar of the goddess they may sacrifice it, since this is ordained. . . . Thou hast nurtured me for a glory to Greece, and I will not refuse to die."

So everywhere the beings who most strongly and justly lay claim to our confidence pass by and by beyond the testing of their actions, and commend themselves to us and command our faith in them by what we know they are. It would be strange and very dreadful if this were not true of God, if to the end of all our intercourse with Him we always had to try each treat-

ment which He sent to us by that one act's evident reasonableness, justice, and kindness. That were to live in the most meagre relationship to Him with whom our whole soul's desire that our relationship should be most intimate and rich. That hateful watch on God to see whether He would not fail us after all, that suspicious guard over ourselves lest we should give Him too extravagantly more of our heart's trust than He had deserved or justified, would make religion odious. There never has been a religion really deserving of the name which has not gone beyond that and in some way, in some degree, trusted the Godhood which it dimly saw, because of what it dimly knew Him to be, even in all its inability to understand His actions.

This has been true of all religions, but it is most true of Christianity. When Christ came, it was distinctly for this purpose, to make men know God, — God Himself, God in, behind, His actions. This was the purpose of the Incarnation. No longer on difficult and hazardous deductions from His treatment of them were men to depend alone for the understanding of God's nature. "The Light of the Knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," says Paul; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," says Jesus. Still helped, no doubt, by what they saw God do, but shown by Jesus what God was behind His doing, what the God was who did all that was done to them, — so they who received the truth of Christ were to attain to faith in the fatherliness of their Heavenly Father.

In the few moments which remain, let us consider how such a faith must shape and influence our life. I

have already spoken of it all along with reference to the way in which it must affect our thoughts of joy and sorrow. Have not your hearts, my friends, at least sometimes, caught sight of a possible faith in God by which you might believe in Him, believe on Him, trust Him, even although no tokens of His presence or His love came to you in the shape of special pleasures, or even of the ordinary joys of living, — even although there came to you from Him what men who simply saw His treatment of you, and knew nothing of your insight into His character, thought as they watched it must be a sure destruction of your faith? To stand with the good things of life all stripped away, to stand beaten and buffeted by storms of disaster and disappointment, to stand with all our brethren saying, "Behold, how God hates him," and yet to know assuredly in our own hearts that God loves us, to know it so assuredly, with the intercourse that lies between our heart and His, that we can freely let go the outward tokens of His love, as the most true and trusty friends do not need to take gifts from one another for assurance of their affection, — this surely is the perfection of a faithful life. It is the gathering up of all happinesses into one happiness which is so rich that it can live without them all, and yet regally receives them into itself as the ocean receives the rivers.

But happiness is not the only one, nor the richest one, of the gifts of God. There are two other gifts which every true man values vastly more than happiness. They are light and work. It would be sad indeed if our principle did not apply to them; but it

does! To stand in the darkness and yet know that God is light; to want to know the truth about a thousand mysteries, the answer to a thousand problems, and not to find the truth, the answers, anywhere, and yet to know beyond a peradventure that God is not hiding from us anything which it is possible and useful for us to know; to stand in the darkness and yet know that God is light, — that is a great and noble faith, a faith to which no man can come who does not know God. If I know Him, know how He, by the very necessity of being what He is, must value character in us more than acquirement, then I can understand how He can permit knowledge to be hidden from us till the time when its acquirement will bring the richest help to character; and, knowing that, I can live unrebelliously in darkness though I am always seeking after light, and though I am certain all the time that God is light and desires light for all His creatures.

And so too about work. To want to do some useful labor in the world, to think that useless life is only premature death, to find ourselves apparently shut out from usefulness, and yet to believe that God wants us to grow into His likeness by whom all the work of the great working universe proceeds, — that is indeed a puzzle to one's faith. It may be that God used to give you plentiful chance of work for Him. Your days went singing by, each winged with some enthusiastic duty for the Master whom you loved. Then it was easy to believe that He was training you; His contact with your life was manifest; the use He made of you was very clear. By and by came a change. He took all

that away. He snatched your work out of your hands, or made your hands so weak with sickness that they let it drop themselves. What then? Have you been able still, in idleness, in what seems uselessness, to keep the assurance of His care for you? Have you been able still to be satisfied with knowing just that here you were, ready to be used if He wanted to use you, ready also to be laid aside if He thought best? That has depended upon whether all your old work with Him really brought you to know Him. If it did, if in it all, while you delighted in doing it, the principal blessing of it all was that it permitted you to look into God's soul and see how self-complete and perfect and supreme He was; how, after all His workings, it was not in His works but in His nature, not in His doing but in His being, that God's true glory lay; if as you worked with Him, you really looked into His nature and discerned all this, — then when He takes your work away and bids you no longer to do good and obedient things but only to be good and obedient, surely that is not the death of faith. That may be faith's transfiguration. You can be idle for Him, if so He wills, with the same joy with which you once labored for Him. The sick-bed or the prison is as welcome as the harvest-field or the battle-field, when once your soul has come to value as the end of life the privilege of seeking and of finding Him.

So out of all our thought this afternoon there comes one prayer which sums up everything: O Lord, by all Thy dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to Thee. Let us value no

treatment of Thy grace simply because it makes us happy or because it makes us sad, because it gives us or denies us what we want; but may all that Thou sendest us bring us to Thee, that knowing Thy perfectness we may be sure in every disappointment that Thou art still loving us, and in every darkness that Thou art still enlightening us, and in every enforced idleness that Thou art still using us; yea, in every death that Thou art giving us life, as in His death Thou didst give life to Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen!

XIX.

THE JOY WITH GOD.

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.
LUKE xv. 16.

THE law that "a man is known by the company he keeps" works upward as well as downward. We are too apt to give it mostly a downward operation. If a man seeks the society of ruffians and thieves, we are ready enough to think that he himself is coarse and dishonest; but if a man tries to live in the company of good and reputable people, we are not so ready to believe that he too is pure and trustworthy. We wonder whether it is not for the purpose of making himself seem respectable and shielding himself under the shadow of their goodness; we wonder whether he may not be an impostor or a toady. It is part of our suspicious and despondent disposition to attribute a strength to wickedness which we will not allow to goodness; but really goodness is the stronger power, and more natures in the world to-day are being made noble and pure by keeping company with nobleness and purity, than are being made base by the contagion of baseness. Think of the children with their fathers and their mothers, think of the unselfish and exalting friendships, think of the generous ambitions which every great good man

inspires, and, disposed as you may be to think ill of human life, you must own that it is so.

It is of this companionship with the good, with the best, that I am to preach to you to-day. The good shepherd bringing home his sheep says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found it." We think about the shepherd and about the sheep, but all the while, surrounding the familiar parable, there is a dim and shadowy company of whom we do not often think. They are the shepherd's friends. He claims their friendly sympathy; and so they represent to us the people everywhere who are known to be good by their society with goodness, who are both shown to be noble and pure, and also are made to be nobler and purer by their power to rejoice with the noblest and purest natures in their success.

To "rejoice with" a fellow-man implies a very intimate association with him. You may work with a man, sell goods at the same counter, or dig dirt in the same ditch, and that is mere companionship of habits. You may think with a man, have the same conception of what your work is, and how it ought to be done; that is companionship of mind. But there comes a deeper kind of company when you come to share your fellow-worker's joy, when you are glad with an echo of his gladness and feel enthusiasm answering to his; then there is real companionship of nature. "Idem velle et idem nolle," to love and hate alike, — that has always been the expression of the closest union.

For a man's joy in what he has to do is the heart and soul of his relation to it; or rather it is the relation of his heart and soul to it. Faithfulness to one's work

may be only an outside bondage, but joy in it is a relationship of heart to heart, — of the heart of the man to the heart of his task. He, then, who enters into a worker's joy enters into fellowship with the worker's heart, and must come close to him.

It follows from all this that there can be no sign of sharing a great man's greatness like the power to rejoice with him in the success of his great works; and it is a kind of partnership with him which is open to any fellow-man who, however inferior to him in powers, however incapable of doing the great thing himself, is in such sympathy with the great man's fundamental desires that he is capable of being glad because his friend is glad. Here is where little men and great men may freely come together. You and I perhaps know nothing about natural science, but we hear that some great scientific discovery has been made, and instantly we think how glad the man must be who made it; and in our rejoicing with him we are brought at once into an association with this new discovery which would otherwise have been entirely indifferent to us. We perhaps know nothing about art, but we see the artist's eye kindle as his inner vision of beauty takes color on canvas, or takes shape in stone; and being glad that he is glad, we pass over through his human sympathy and have some part in that artistic triumph with which we could have established no direct connection.

And even when the work is not the man's own but merely one which he is capable of appreciating as you are not, still your joy in his joy may be the means of introducing you to regions from which you would other-

wise be entirely excluded. It may be that some great advance of Christianity is noted, — perhaps some advance of Christian thought in which man's reverent study has reached a little deeper into the mystery of God, perhaps an advance of Christian activity by which the Gospel has filled some new darkness of heathenism with its light. You are glad, but you are not Christian enough to be very glad; but close at your side there stands a man who is Christian through and through. You can feel his soul leap and dilate. He looks round to you for sympathy in his delight, and you catch the kindling of his eye. Do you not know the process? At first you are only glad that he is glad; but it cannot stop there. When you have gone as far as that, his gladness takes you into its power. Through him you pass over to his interest. You see that it must be a great joy which could make such a man so happy, and by and by you are glad with an echo of his gladness. You are triumphant over the same success of Christianity in which he so heartily rejoices.

Herein lies the interpreting power of great enthusiastic men. They bring out the value of things so that other men can see them. They stand with their need of human sympathy and look from the things which they love and admire to their fellow-men and cry to them, "Rejoice with us!" and it is in the effort to answer their demand for sympathy that the loveliness and admirableness of the thing they praise becomes apparent to the eyes of common men. This is what happens when you walk through a great picture gallery with a true artist. At first you are surprised, perhaps you are disgusted at

yourself. You find yourself praising the pictures that he praises and having no eyes for anything which he passes by with indifference. You say, "I have no mind of my own. I am his mere echo. I do not really like these things, I am only trying to like them because he does." But very possibly you are wrong. It is very likely that your artist companion is revealing to you what you are perfectly capable of appreciating, although you are not capable of discovering it. The revelation comes not through any formal lecture that he gives, but through the subtler and finer medium of sympathy with his delight. That it is real appreciation and not mere imitation you will feel sure when by and by you go back alone to the picture and find that still, though he is no longer with you, the charm which you felt in it through him remains. He has not blinded but enlightened your perceptions; and, much as they may afterward develop their individuality and show how different they are from his, still they will always owe to him the debt for their first enlightenment, as the flower comes to shine in the sunlight with a color that is all its own, but yet would never have shone at all if the sunlight had not first shone upon it.

I suppose that almost all one's patriotism gets more of its life in this way than we know. It is the great patriots that interpret the value of their country to the common citizen. The man absorbed in his own small affairs, or so restricted in his power of thought that he would never have taken in the national idea for himself abstractly, sees how Washington and Webster and Lincoln loved the land; and through their love for it, its

worthiness of his own love becomes made known to him. Still his love for his country, when it is awakened, is his own, and may impel him to serve her in most peculiar personal ways, very different from theirs, but none the less it is true that but for the interpretation of these great men's honor for her, he would have honored his country less or not at all.

Can we not see how necessary it is that all of us should live with men who are greater than ourselves, and try to share their joys? We cannot afford to shut ourselves up to the value of those things whose value we ourselves are able to discover. Live with enthusiastic, noble men and you will find the world opening its inspiring delights to you on every side. If charity to you is dull and stupid, if you cannot conceive what pleasure it can give to help the poor, go and put your life as close as possible to the most enthusiastic helper of the poor that you can find. Stand where, when he has made a poor man's lot the brighter and looks round for some one with whom to share his pleasure, his kindling eye shall fall on you. That is the truest way, — to put yourself at least close to the gate which leads to the delight in charity, even though it be only close to it on the outside. When he turns round and says to you, "Rejoice with me, for I have made an unhappy man happy," then it may be that the door will open and you too can go in yourself to the delightful service of your fellowmen!

But now it is time to turn more directly to our text. In the parable of Jesus it is the shepherd returning from his search with the rescued sheep upon his shoul-

ders who calls out to his friends, "Rejoice with me!" The Shepherd of the parable we know is Christ Himself, and Christ is the manifestation of God in the world. In this familiar picture, then, we have the voice of God calling on all His children to rejoice in the good work which He is able to do for any one of His children. Let me point out to you a few of the ideas which that picture suggests. Do we not feel at once how this agrees with all that we know about the will and ways of God? Nothing that we have seen of Him ever gives us the idea of a great Lord standing outside of His estate and helping, however kindly, each one of His subjects by himself, without reference to the rest. God uses man to save his fellow-man. He brings in all the machinery of social life and folds it around the special soul which He wants to rescue, and bids it help, and delight in helping, the unfortunate and lost. This is the very commonplace of our observation of God's ways. He works through human means, we say. And at the root of this disposition to rescue man by man — to work by human means — I am sure that there lies the fact of a very close and vital and essential union between God and man; that old truth to which we are forever coming back. When God calls in the aid of man for fellow-man, or when God summons man to rejoice in fellow-man's salvation, it is not a baffled workman calling for help to do work which he cannot do himself, nor is it a conqueror commanding the crowd to shout his praises. It is something wholly different from either. It is the father of a family gathering around himself the other children and telling them of the need or of the rescue of

one child whose interests are theirs as well as his, in saving whom they and he are really one.

You have a friend who has fallen into some wretched vice. As clearly as if God's voice spoke to you out of the sky you hear the divine summons to go and rescue that poor soul. You go, and by and by that soul is brought back into purity and honesty again; and then there comes into your heart that old familiar consciousness which has been in such multitudes of hearts, that it is not really you but God who has saved him. It is God using you. Behind your power you feel a stronger power. Above your joy you are aware of another joy as much more joyous as the perception of the wretchedness of the vice from which the rescued soul has escaped is more intense. That joy and your joy are not two but one. Your joy rests upon and is fed out of that joy as the sunlight rests upon and is fed out of the sun. Never are your soul and God's soul so near together as in that common joy; never are you more perfectly and consciously his child than when, in a delight which cannot be divided and portioned into shares between you, but is blended and mingled as one single emotion, you rejoice together over the finding of the sheep which was lost.

Another thought which is suggested by the picture is the need of God for human sympathy. In many forms that idea is seen floating through the Bible. It is not easy to grasp. When we try to define it and realize it in detail it often eludes us and bewilders us, sometimes it almost shocks us; but we feel its fascination, and we know that there is truth in it. God's need of human

sympathy! At first it seems as if there were some weakening in our conception of God in such a thought as that. That God should care what we poor mortals think about His ways, that it should make any difference to Him whether we see the beauty of His character and love, — that seems to weaken Him. Why should He not go on His way, content with His own perfection, regardless of what we or any other creatures in His universe may think of what He does? That, we say, is our idea of the greatest greatness. But is it? It is our first idea, no doubt. Our earliest thought of greatness is entire self-containment; but by and by that thought becomes crude and vulgar in comparison with another loftier and finer thought which comes up to take its place. By and by always the greatest men are seen fulfilling their greatness by an earnest and loving demand that lesser natures should complete their happiness by sharing it. The savior of his country wins not less but more respect, does not detract from but increase his dignity, when a new lustre kindles in his eye at the sight of men, women, and little children who come crowding round him with shouts of triumph over the liberty and peace which he has won for them. The same is true of God. It is the passage from the low and crude into the loftier and finer thought of God when we conceive of Him as caring for His children's thought of Him.

It is the sign of how fine and high and true the Bible thought of God is that the pages of the Old and New Testaments are full of this idea. It comes to its completest utterance in Christ, in the sublime sensitive-

ness of the character of Him who, while He never swerved an inch out of His path to win a man's applause or to escape a sneer, yet lets us freely see through His transparent story how the face grows sad when the half-hearted disciples turn their back on Him and go away, and how it brightens when Peter calls Him the world's Saviour, or when even in the agony of death a fellow-sufferer cries out to Him for mercy and owns Him as the King of Paradise. Surely it sets some of our false ideas of greatness right, and lets us see that the truest dignity is to be attained not in separation from our brethren but in closest sympathy with them, even in urgent need of them, when we hear Christ, full of the manifested power and mercy of God, appealing to men to rejoice with Him in the fulfilment of His glorious work.

Again the summons of God for men to join Him in His joy appears to open a new region of motive, which, if it really becomes influential with any of us, must become very strong indeed in inciting us to noble work. Who does not know how we need every motive which we can have to keep us faithful to the good works which we know ought to be done, but from which our hands so often drop discouraged? The pleasure of the task itself; the harm and misery which will result if some one does not do it; the gratitude of those for whom it is directly undertaken; the sympathy and honor of our fellow-men, — I am sure that there are many of you who hear me who have often and often summoned all of these motives and bidden them inspire your hesitating will to do some half-attractive, half-repugnant duty of

righteousness or charity. Perhaps some of you now, with such a duty just before you, are calling almost desperately for these powerful champions to come and strengthen your weakness, lest you fail. And yet, with all the strength that comes from them, how weak you are! Can you imagine another motive which, without interfering with or crowding out any of these, might possibly come in and multiply their strength with all the intenseness of your love for God? What if you could know that if you did that duty bravely and faithfully God would be glad; what if you could know that if you thought out your hard problem honestly, or overcame your lust manfully, God would send down His message to you, "I am rejoicing with you, oh, my child; come and rejoice with me that you have conquered!" Would not that make you stronger? Would it not be as if at last the captain had joined his hesitating and imperilled army when such a motive as that came in, shining and confident, among the half-dismayed and frightened motives which had been trying to rally and lead on your life.

But a man may be sure of that, a man must be sure of that, if he is genuinely certain that there is a God at all. From the shop-boy tempted to steal, up to the leader of some goodly cause tempted to lower his standard in discouragement, there is no human being set to do duty who may not, if he will, throw behind his own weakness this great strength. "If I can only persevere, if I only can be faithful, I may rejoice with God! If I fail and give up, the door closes upon that inmost chamber of the soul's company with God in which it shares

His joy." There are souls as incapable of feeling the power of that motive as a deaf man is of responding to the trumpet; but to any soul which can feel it and answer to it there comes strength which almost insures success.

All these are ways in which it helps a man when he hears God calling upon him to rejoice with Him in His salvation of the world. But I think on the whole that there is no help coming to us out of such a summons which helps us more than that which corresponds to the enlightenment that I tried to describe at the beginning of my sermon as coming from man to man when such an invitation passes from one to the other. When God bids us rejoice with Him in the salvation of a soul, it is a revelation to us of what a precious thing a soul must be. I pictured the artist going through a gallery and bidding you rejoice with him in some great picture, and I bade you remember how in the light of his summons you saw the picture's greatness. I pictured the patriot interpreting the value of their country to the great host of his duller fellow-citizens. Now think what an illumination must come to a man who is working sluggishly for some good cause when the fact of God's love for what he works for gets into his heart. You are working along in our sluggish missionary way, doing with weary punctiliousness your yearly task for the conversion of the world, contributing when Epiphany comes round a little piece of money of such a size that if every man in the church contributed as much once every year the Gospel would be preached to all the world in about a hundred thousand years. As you are lounging so over

your task, you hear of some heathen tribe which has cast away its idols and accepted Christ. You know what that means for them. You know it means a new, clean life, family purity, education, liberty, the lifting of all life into self-respect, and the quickening of the vision and the hope of souls which used to lie in darkness and the shadow of death. You read the news, and you think it is a good thing, and then you are just about to turn back to your business when out of heaven there comes down a voice to you, crying, "Rejoice with me! Rejoice with me!" It is the voice of God! The God of the spirits of all flesh. Behold! to Him this bit of tidings from the southern seas seems to be full of glory. Can you hear His summons and not see anew how glorious the tidings are?

Some friend here by your side attains to a new life, casts off the sloth or vice which has been crushing him into a brute and begins to live for God. He begins to know his own soul. He grows ashamed of sin. He sees visions of purity and spiritual growth before him which make time and eternity glow with hope. He sets himself down to the long, hard, patient, glowing struggle of duty. He takes his stand on Christ's side. He breaks his old comradeship and calls all good men his brethren; and you, a good man, a Christian man, say, "I am glad of it. My friend always was kindly and honest, now he is all right. He has joined the church. He is where he ought to be." And then, perhaps, you set yourself to wondering what sort of a church it is that he has joined, and noticing whether he bows in the creed or not, and asking whether he is

going to be a high churchman or a low churchman! And just then comes the song of the Shepherd, bringing home His treasure, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost." That is what this man's conversion means for Jesus Christ. It is a lost soul rescued into the family of God, and the heart of the family is richer for the return of this lost fragment. Is there no revelation there for you which makes the whole transaction seem a different thing? Is not your brother's soul more precious when you see how Christ cares for it? Do you not want to help your Lord in the completion of that soul's salvation, even as the under-shepherds might have run to meet the rescuer whose voice they heard, and taken his burden off his shoulders, and tended the rescued sheep, and fed it until it was strong again, — as they might have done all this when they read the value of the sheep in what their Lord was ready to do to save it?

You hear of the partial success of some good cause. You know the cause is good, but men despise it; they call it fanatical, quixotic, or something else as foolish. Some day it wins a success, and you are glad, but you keep your gladness to yourself. You hear men in the streets sneering at this unpopular thing which is presumptuously daring to be successful without their support, and you are slavish and cowardly and hold your peace. What a rebuke and what a freedom comes when out of heaven you hear the voice of Christ triumphant over this, over which the streets and the clubs are so contemptuous, and calling to you, "Rejoice with me, for another of my good causes has succeeded." This is

the way in which causes often get possession of the world. The men who are most in sympathy with God become aware that God rejoices in the cause's success; so they have its desert interpreted to them till they too desire it earnestly; and then in their turn they interpret to their fellow-men what God has first interpreted to them, till ultimately the fire which starts from the central heart of all runs through the world, and the blindest are enlightened to discern, and the most timid become bold enough to praise, the movement which at first had no friend but God.

I know that when I speak thus I am drawing out into distinct definition what, as it works in the human soul, is only vaguely realized. It is not analyzed as I have tried to analyze it. It lies in the memory as a half-conscious experience. But yet I think that as I close I may appeal to your experiences and ask you to bear witness to what I have been saying. If ever, as you worked conscientiously but feebly at some good work, you have been conscious, however dimly, that you were not working alone but that your work was dear in some way to the Heart on which all our life rests; if ever, trying to help your brethren, you have known as a richer motive than your love for them the love of God to whom their souls were dear; if ever duty, struck for an instant by the certainty that it was God's wish, has blazed into sudden beauty as a diamond blazes when it is smitten by the sun, — in any of those experiences you have known what it was to hear God call to you, "Come, rejoice with Me!"

It must be a noble, happy life which lives in such

experiences all the time. It must be a life calm, exalted, active, independent; and yet see how simple are the conditions of such a life! It is simply a life whose ears are open, through constant sympathy with God, to hear what God loves and desires, and whose heart has so accepted Him as its Master that His desires become its desires through its admiring love. They are sublime conditions, but they are wonderfully simple. They are the conditions which any soul must reach which has been really brought back out of its sins and forgiven and reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Into that life, by what way He chooses, may He bring us all!

XX.

THE ILLUMINATION OF OBEDIENCE.

Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. — JOHN ii. 5.

THROUGH the mists of long and devout tradition which have obscured her character and made her very person almost mythical we are surprised sometimes in reading the Gospels at the clearness and simplicity with which Mary the mother of our Lord stands out before us there. She speaks only on three occasions, but when she speaks her words have such a directness and transparency about them, they come so short and true, they are so perfectly the words that an earnest and unselfish woman would have spoken that they leave us the clearest and most satisfactory idea of what manner of woman she must have been. Those three utterances of hers are like three clear notes of a bell, that show how sound and rich its metal is. Think what they were. In the presence of the messenger who comes to tell her of her great privilege she bows her head and says, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word." When she finds her son in the temple she cries out to Him, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." When she stands with Him before the puzzled guests at Cana she turns to the servants and says, "Whatsoever He

saith unto you, do it." The young soul's consecration! The mother's overrunning love! The disciple's perfect loyalty! What can be clearer than the simple, true, brave, loving woman that those words reveal? How all the poor tawdry mythology which has clustered about her, and called her the Queen of Heaven, disappears before the vastly deeper beauty of this true woman of the earth, who wins our confidence and love.

I want to speak to-day of the last of those three words, and some of its suggestions. You remember the circumstances, but let me repeat them once more in the words of the ever-fresh and beautiful old story. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage. And when they wanted wine the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman what have I to do with thee, my hour is not come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." It is a moment of bewilderment. The impatient guests are asking for what the host has not to give them. The mother of Jesus turns to Him, but He seems to put her suggestion back. There is an air of embarrassment about it all. She and the guests are puzzled, and then she says to them, as if that were the only outlet and escape from their perplexity, "Do what He bids you do." It is as if she said, "I do not understand Him, I do not know what He means or why He speaks as you have heard Him speak, but the only way for Him to interpret Himself is to say what He wants done, and you and I in doing it

will see exactly what He means. Therefore, whatever He saith unto you, do it." We ask ourselves at once, where had she learned this of her son? And we remember that since the last glimpse the Gospel gave us of them, they have been quietly living together, mother and son, at Nazareth. There she had studied Him with a love that must have been more and more filled with reverence. There she had realized the mystery of His nature. And one of the things which her experience of Him had taught her must have been just this: that often there were meanings and ideas which He intended to convey which could not be set forth in words, but which must be displayed in action, — in the completely sympathetic action of two beings working together with a common will. Can we not picture many a time in the intercourse of their quiet home in which this must have come to her, — times when some deep mysterious word fell from His lips which awed and fascinated her, perhaps, but of which she could make no clear meaning, and when, as she watched His actions and helped them, doing all that He wanted her to do, there gradually came out from His action the meaning which was in His words, but which they could not perfectly express? I think their life together must have been full of such experiences. There is something like it in the relation that all thoughtful and watchful parents hold to their little children. How often you have watched their actions and quietly helped them out, and learned from them what they were wholly powerless to put in words! There are always some childlike people of whom we feel that the only true expression must be

in the working out of their activity. They cannot tell their meaning except in deeds. We feel something of the same kind in our intercourse with Nature. We try to catch her messages, to put ourselves into sympathy with the vague spirit which breathes through all her life; but at the last we learn that it is only by obedience, only by helping her works to their completest by our service and by attentive study of the things she does, that we come really to know this mysterious life of Nature on whose bosom we are living. Whatsoever she saith unto you, do it. Obey Nature and she will reveal herself to your obedience, — is not that the real watch-word of our modern science?

And like that, only more deep and holy, was the law which the mother of Jesus had learned in the treatment of her Son. That only by doing His will, even when it was darkest, could she truly come to the light which she knew was in Him.

It sounds perhaps at first as if the words of Mary were a mere utterance of despair; as if she said, "I cannot make Him out. He is far away above us. It is not for us to try to make Him out. Such as we are cannot understand such as He is. All we can do is just to take His commandments in the dark, and do them in the dark, and be content." But if what I have just said is true, the tone of the words is not despair but hope. She does not say, "We cannot know Him;" she only says, "He must take His own way to make us know Him, to make Himself known to us. We cannot understand His words. Let us see what He does. Let us put ourselves into His action by obedience, and we shall understand

Him." Surely she struck there the note of all the best Christian experience that has come since, through all the ages. How familiar has become the grand and simple way in which the soul which has been puzzled with the words of Jesus may stand still and say, "Lord, reveal Thyself to me in dealing with me. I will not hinder Thee. I will obey Thee. Whatsoever Thou sayest unto me I will do it, and so I shall reach the true knowledge of Thee which my soul craves." A man has studied Christ in all the books. He has sat still and meditated, and tried to see through His meditation into the very face of Christ whom he has longed to understand; and he has not succeeded. Christ has seemed to elude him. He would not show Himself. He has almost seemed to lay His hand upon the eyes of the inquiring man as if He said, "What have I to do? Mine hour is not yet come." But then the man looks up and sees a duty, — a very hard one it may be, — or sees a burden which is very heavy. It is evidently coming toward him. He cannot escape it. Suppose that he is lifted up to such a knowledge of it all that he is ready with all his heart to say, "I do not want to escape it. If God sends it, God is in it. God sends nothing, God brings everything. Whatever comes from God has the God whom it comes from in its heart. This, then, is He that is coming to me. What He could not tell me in words about Himself, I shall learn in this touch — what men call this blow — of His hand which I see approaching." Oh, it is possible so to look forward to a great, an awful experience, with something that is truly triumph filling all the pain and drowning

all the dread, so to look to disaster, to sickness, to bereavement, to death, saying, "Now I shall know! In submissive acceptance of God's will I shall understand that which no study of His words could teach me."

But yet our verse does not allow us to forget that all true waiting for Christ's self-revelation is of an active and not merely of a passive sort. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," says Mary. There is something to be done in order that Jesus may show out completely what He is trying to make manifest. And here, I think, is where a human action mounts to its highest dignity, and puts on its fullest meaning. There are two views of human actions. One looks on them as they are in themselves, seeing only the force and friction which is involved in the specific thing that is done, and in the will of the immediate doer; the other regards them as setting free for expression and effect some higher force and purpose, — the force and purpose of God which are waiting behind. One is the purely human, the other is the divine view of human action. It is as when you turn a screw in some great engine. A child who sees it turned thinks only of the hand which he sees turning it, and sees only the twisting of that bit of brass; but to the man who knows the engine the turning of that screw is the setting free of the imprisoned steam to do its work. And so with human actions. Take any one. You engage to-morrow, it may be, in a new business, take a new partner, and begin to sell new goods in a new store. To one man that may mean the setting forth by your own will in search of fortune, — nothing more than that; to another man

it may mean what we can reverently call the opening up to God of chances to show Himself, and work effects which have been seemingly impossible before. New combinations, new contacts, will result out of that act of yours, new needs of divine illumination, of divine guidance are sure to come; and if man's need is indeed God's opportunity, then this new enterprise of yours will surely open some new chink through which the everlasting light can shine, or build some wall against which the everlasting and all-loving voice can echo. And so it is with everything you do. You make a friend, you read a book, you take a journey, you buy a house, you write a letter, and so full is the great world of God, so is He waiting everywhere to make Himself known and to give Himself away, that through this act of yours, to men who are looking and listening, there comes some revelation of His nature and some working of His power. Acts become little or great only according to the degree in which God manifests Himself and works through them. To call acts insignificant or important in themselves is as if a child looked into an engine-room and judged of the importance of different parts of the machinery by the size of the handles that moved them. The slightest handle may set free the great power of the steam. To one who listens wisely, the click of a delicate needle may sound as awful as the thunder of the walking-beam. For acts have their true meanings in the points of manifestation and operation which they give to God. It was not because she knew that somehow they would have wine or something better, it was because her Son would surely show Him-

self through their obedience, if they obeyed Him, that Mary cared what these servants did. It is strange to think what a dignity and interest our own actions might have for us if we constantly recognized this capacity in them which they have not now. We play with bits of glass, finding great pleasure in their pleasant shapes, but never knowing what glorious things they would be if we held them up and let the sun shine through them.

It is necessary for us to recognize that this quality in Jesus which made it impossible that He should perfectly reveal Himself except in His action on and through obedient men, is not something peculiar to Him. It belongs to the very substance of the human nature which He had assumed. The first principle of all influence is, that there is something in every nature which cannot be communicated by mere contact of intelligences. It must pass over, it can only pass over, from man to man through a sympathy of wills; and such a sympathy can exist between an inferior and a superior, between a less and a greater, only where there is loving obedience on one side and loving authority on the other. All the communications of men with one another lie as it were in two strata, — two stories with a floor between them; one story is deeper than the other. In the upper, superficial story men tell each other what they know. All schools, all books, belong in this superficial region of companionship. In the deeper story men give each other what they are. All obedience of will to will, all trust of life in life, belongs in this profounder region. Do you not know the differ-

ence? You go to a man's school, or read his book, and there are great and precious things that pass from him to you. The facts which he has gathered in his industrious study, the ideas that have come forth like stars out of the darkness in his conscientious thought, — these he can give you and he does, and you are richer for them. He has only to teach; you have only to attend and understand. But by and by you come to know the man, to love him, to count his will a better expression of the will of God than your will. You obey him. Then at once is there not a new kind of communication between your life and his? Does he not give you things that he could not give before, — not only facts and ideas, but motives, hopes, fears, loves, dreads, inspirations? You have passed from the upper to the deeper story of companionship, and the passage took place when you passed beyond listening and learning and began to love and to obey. We all have benefactors with whom we live in one chamber or in the other, whom we meet in the upper or the lower regions of communication. Our teachers we meet in the room of instruction; our masters, our saviors, we meet in the deeper room of influence and inspiration. The question of questions, as concerns our Christian faith, is in which room we meet Christ. We certainly meet Him in the upper room where, as we listen, He tells us things we never could have known without Him. Does He meet us also in the deeper chamber where as we obey He reveals to us the very secret of His being and makes us like Himself?

There can be no doubt in which room He wants to meet us. The very fact that His coming was an Incar

nation is a witness of how thoroughly He wanted to give Himself to us. And nothing is finer in the history of His disciples in the Gospels than to see how He led them down from the surface to the depths, — from the upper region in which they followed Him saying, "Master where dwellest Thou?" and He answered, "Come and see," to the profound revelation in which the prostrate disciple cried, "Who art Thou Lord?" and the answer came to him from the sky, "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." The first is enlightenment through attention; the second is regeneration through obedience. In the first, knowledge is given through intelligence; in the second, life is given through the utterly submissive will. This was the essential difference between the teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the scribes which the simple-hearted people on the mountain felt so truly. This was the great transfer and deepening of the learning life to which the Lord invited His disciples when He said, "If any man will do My will, he shall know of the doctrine."

But then perhaps another question comes. "Intelligence comes by obedience you say. I shall hear what Christ has to say to me if I obey Him; but can I obey Him till I first know what He has to say? Have I a right to make myself the servant of any one till I know what it is that he will bid me do?" Or, to take the simple picture of our story, had the mother of Jesus a right to bid any man do whatever her Son should say? Had she the right to bid them obey one whom she did not understand? Must she not wait till she sees what

His commandments are before she can call on them for such unquestioning obedience? The answer lies in the essential difference between faith and sight, those two acts of which men have so long talked so much, and of which it has sometimes seemed as if they understood so little. But how simple they are! Faith is the knowledge of a person; sight is the perception of a thing. To believe anything on faith is to believe it because the person who tells it to me I am sure is trustworthy. To believe anything on sight is to believe it because I myself perceive that it is true. I believe the sun is warm because it pours its gracious heat down upon my open hand. I believe that man, the child of God, is not born to die because God Himself, God manifest in Christ, has told me so. They are not different degrees of certainty, they are different kinds of certainty, — different grounds on which certainty may rest. And just as it evidently needs a different kind of a man to trust a personal nature and to examine the structure of a thing, so there will always be a certain broad difference between the men of faith and the men of sight. There is not the slightest antagonism between them, but the ideas are always distinct, always distinguishable.

And now with this distinction clear in our minds, see what a perfect right one has — one who knows Christ by any true experience of His character as Mary knew Him — to bid other men obey Him even although they do not know what commandments He will give. You are a Christian, let us say. You have known this Lord of ours for many years. You have learned from many an experience to trust Him absolutely. Well, some

day I come to you with a poor handful of confused ideas about Him, with a poor heartful of broken hopes, faded enthusiasms, disappointed expectations. "See, I am all lost, I can make nothing of life!" I cry to you; "What shall I do?" And you just turn to me and point to Christ, and say, "Obey Him, follow Him. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." It is an astonishing answer. I am not ready for it. I turn on you and say, "Follow Him! Why? Where will He lead me? What will He make me do?" And your answer is, "I do not know. If I did know I should not need to point you to Him. I need then only point you to your task. I only know He cannot lead you wrong. I do not know His way, but I know Him." That is faith. And if I still persist, and say I will not promise to obey Him until I know just what He will have me do, so that I can see for myself that it is the best thing to be done, then I am asking not for faith but for sight. How simple it is. I hear men praying everywhere for more faith, but when I listen to them carefully and get at the real heart of their prayers, very often it is not more faith at all that they are wanting, but a change from faith to sight. "What shall I do with this sorrow that God has sent me?" "Take it up and bear it, and get a strength and blessing out of it." "Ah, if I only knew what blessing there was in it, if I saw how it would help me, then I could bear it like a plume!" "What shall I do with this hard, hateful duty which Christ has laid right in my way?" "Do it, and grow by doing it." "Ah, yes; if I could only see that it would make me grow." In both these cases do you not

see that what you are begging for is not more faith, although you think it is, but sight. You want to see for yourself the blessing in the sorrow, the strength in the hard and hateful task. Faith says not, "I see that it is good for me, and so God must have sent it," but "God sent it, and so it must be good for me." Faith walking in the dark with God only prays Him to clasp its hand more closely, does not even ask Him for the lifting of the darkness so that the man may find the way himself. Mary is all faith when she says, "Do what He tells you, and all must come right simply because He is He." Blessed the heart that has learned such a faith and can stand among men in all their doubts and darknesses and just point to Jesus Christ, and say, "Do His will and everything must come right with you. I do not know how, but I know Him. God forbid that I should try to lead you, but I can put your hand in His hand and bid you go where He shall carry you!"

There is a reason then; Mary had a right to say what she said to the servants. We may have good right to say the same thing to ourselves and to each other. There is one complete act by which a man is justified in taking his whole life and giving it over into the keeping and authority of a Being whom he has thoroughly tried and perfectly trusts. That is the act of faith; an act, as I trust you see, not irrational but full of the profoundest spiritual reason. There is a conviction of our Friend's trustworthiness so large and deep that we know He must be universal. He is not ours alone. He is all men's if they will trust Him too, and so it is possible for us to turn to every man we meet and, out of the

perfect certainty of our own heart, say to him, "Do this great act. Make this my Lord your Lord. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That is the preaching of faith, — the consummate work that any man can do as it regards his fellow-man, surpassing utterly all the most wise and watchful care and suggestion about the details and special actions of the life, this claiming of the life as one great whole for its true Lord.

Think what there must come — I rejoice to know that to many of you I may say, Remember what has come — with such a complete acceptance of the overlying and surrounding authority of Christ. The two things that men's lives want most as they grow older are, I think, simplicity and independence. We become broken and scattered among a thousand interests until life has no unity, and we become fettered by a hundred gradually-accumulated obligations, till, without ever having deliberately given ourselves away, we grow aware, with a dull and heavy consciousness, that we are no longer our own, and cannot act ourselves. The only restoration of both — of simplicity and independence — must come, not by the cutting off of our relationships and the rebellion against authorities, — that would be ruining the life in the vain attempt to save it, — but by enveloping all the relationships in one great relationship, and by subordinating all the authorities to one great authority. The child's life is simple and independent. He can think of it as a unit, and he can walk across false masteries which try to govern him almost without seeing them. And why? Because his life is held, firmly and warmly, in another life. It may be that you have lost

this privilege and power of the child. If you are like most men, you certainly have lost it. How shall you get it back? There is only one way, — you must be a child again. You must be converted and become like a child. Not by cutting your life down and making it meagre will you make it simple, not by making it restive and rebellious will you make it independent; but if ever, to-day or any other golden day, — though to-day is the best day in which to do it that you will ever see, — if ever you can take your life and, won by His love and justified by the abundant assurance of His faithfulness that He has given you, you can give your life away to Christ, saying as the comprehensive law of all your action, "Whatsoever Thou sayest unto me, O Lord, I will do it," then simplicity and independence will open around you like the peace around the disciples when their Lord was in their storm-tossed boat. Then you may make your relations with your fellow-men as rich and full as possible. You may accumulate the dependences which make the sweetness and value of a life on every side, but, held in the grasp of that great loyalty, the multiplicity of life shall make and not destroy simplicity; and you shall be men's servant without being their slave, just as Jesus was, when you are as truly His servant as He was the servant of His Father.

I have talked freely this morning about obeying Christ, about doing whatever Christ says to us. I know that there are some souls among you in which such words have started anew the question and the doubt which has often haunted them before. I must try to show where

the answer to that question lies, before I let you go. You say, "I would indeed obey if Christ should speak to me, but can He speak? Can I hear Him and be sure it is His voice? Oh, if I only could have been there where He lived in the flesh! Then I should have known that it was He. Now, is it not all a vague figure of speech when you talk to me about obeying Jesus, a Jesus whom I never saw, whose voice I never heard?" The question is one that easily becomes confused in theory, but practically I believe that it is much clearer than we think. "Obeying Christ," we say; and what is Christ? I think over all that I know of Him, and this is what He is: First, He is the utterance of the eternal righteousness, the setting forth before men of that supreme nature in which there is the source and pattern of all goodness, — God; second, He is a man of clear, sharp, definite character, who lived a life in Palestine which still shines with a distinctness that no other human life can rival; third, by His spirit He is a perpetual presence, a constant standard and inspiration in the heart of every man who loves and trusts Him. All those things come up to me when I say "Christ." And now can such a Christ speak to me? Can He say to me, "Do this?" If as I think about some act which it is possible for me to do, there rise up about that act these three convictions: First, that it is right, that it is in harmony with that great, constant goodness which fills the world and comes from God; second, that that man in Palestine would have done it if it had offered itself to Him there as it offers itself to me here; and third, that if I do it now, my own soul will be fed and strength-

ened. If these three convictions come and gather round that act, and take it up and lay it before my conscience and my heart, then I know Christ is bidding me do it. Is that clear? There is some act that you are questioning, about to-morrow or to-day. If Jesus were at hand, you would go out and ask Him, — "Is it Thy will that I should do it, oh, my Lord?" Can you not ask Him now? Is the act right? Would He do it? Will it help your soul? It is not often that a man really is in doubt who seriously wants to know the answer to any of these questions. And if the answer to them all is "yes!" then it is just as truly His command that you should do that act as if His gracious figure stood before your sight and His finger visibly pointed to the task. You say, perhaps, "I might know that an act was right and that would be enough, without bringing in Christ at all. Why need I think of it as His command?" Only because He is just that, — the reassertion, the enforcement of essential duty. He does not make righteousness, He reveals it; and when the soul that loves Him does an act at His command it is conscious that it is doing that which in the very nature of things, in the very nature of God, it was bound to do.

But let us not grow confused with many words. I turn to your own consciences, dear friends. Is there nothing that Christ as your friend, your Lord, your Saviour, wants you to do that you are leaving undone to-day? Do you doubt one instant that with His high and deep love for your soul, He wants you to pray? — And do you pray? Do you doubt one instant that it is His will that you should honor and help and bless all these

men about you who are His brethren? — And are you doing anything like that? Do you doubt one instant that His will is that you should make life serious and lofty? — And are you making it frivolous and low? Do you doubt one instant that He wants you to be pure in deed and word and thought? — And are you pure? Do you doubt one instant that His command is for you openly to own Him and declare that you are His servant before all the world? — And have you done it? These are the questions which make the whole matter clear. No, not in quiet lanes, nor in bright temple-courts as once He spoke, and not from blazing heavens as men seem sometimes to expect, — not so does Christ speak to us. And yet He speaks! I know what He, there in His glory, He here in my heart, wants me to do to-day, and I know that I am not mistaken in my knowledge. It is no guess of mine. It is His voice that tells me.

How full of mystery and light our life becomes as we go on into it, not knowing what there will be there for us to do, but knowing that through it all He will be with us and in us giving us His commandments, and resolved only on this, that whatsoever He shall say to us, we will do it always. What will He say? What wondrous new commandments has He in reserve which, as we lovingly obey them, are to make the interest and growth and glory of these coming years?

And let us remember that here, in what we have been thinking of this morning, lies the real bond of union between this life and what we choose to call "the other life," — the life that lies beyond the grave. There as here obedience to Christ and everlasting revelation of

Christ to the obedient soul is to be the essence and delight of life. Oh, my dear friends, let us do whatsoever He saith unto us now, that then we may be ready for the higher duties and the completer revelations which He will have to give us through eternity.

XXI.

THE CERTAIN END.

Then cometh the end. — 1 Cor. xv. 24.

It is not possible to rule these words out of life. They are perpetually recurring. You tell of any process; you trace out how it is going to work on from step to step; you see how cause opens into effect and then effect, becoming cause, opens into still further effect beyond, — but always, by and by, your thought comes to a stoppage and a change. The process is exhausted. "Then cometh the end." Your story has to round itself with that.

We look into a child's face and imagine the life which he will live. We see him growing up from childhood into manhood; all the works that he will do, all the truths that he will learn, all the associations that he will form, roll out their length before us: we let our eye run along their course; but at last we must reach the point where, "Then cometh the end," sums up and closes all.

You start upon a new business, you build you a new house, you set on foot some new measure of public policy, you begin some new study, you enter some new school, — whatever you do, however long are the anticipations of what you undertake, there is where they all arrive at

last. "Then cometh the end," is written, however far away, as the conclusion which all must reach.

And if we go far out beyond the little reach of our own personal affairs, still it is the same. Our text is telling us of Christ. Here is the great work which He is doing, conquering death, redeeming men from sin, claiming the world for God; but even of His work it is written, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Even the great redemptive work of Christ must some day be folded up and finished, and some new dispensation, some longer expression of the life of God upon the life of men must come to take its place.

This constant recurrence of ends and finishing places in life must certainly mean something. It may beget a mere frivolity. It may make it seem as if nothing were worth beginning very earnestly or prosecuting very thoroughly. "What is the use?" a man may say. "If every thing I do, every bit of work I undertake, is to be hurried up and tossed aside for a new work, if my whole life is some morning to be rounded off where that morning happens to find it, and the poor-finished, unfinished thing is to be flung into the basket, and another life is to be set up on these spindles of circumstances where mine is whirling now, what is the use? Why should I be thoughtful? Why should I be serious? Let me eat, drink, and be merry."

Another man gets out of precisely the same state of things a totally different impression. This quick, sharp beat in life, this constant coming round to where

the shears cut off the work, and where if it is not done it has to stay undone forever, this perpetual ripening of processes which makes the seed-time of new processes beyond, this constant ending and beginning, gives a freshness and vitality to living which is exhilarating and delightful. It seems to be always bringing life back to report itself to its first principles and fundamental motives. It is forever breaking up routines and starting things anew. It demands briskness and promptness. "Now or never you must do this thing," it seems to say, "for in a few moments the chance is over and then cometh the end."

Let us think of this characteristic of life and try to see what it means. Let us see what sort of temper and spirit it ought to produce, — this law of life that all things come to an end, that only by perpetual stoppage and re-starting is motion kept up, only by perpetual perishing is life maintained.

And we may begin by noting this, — which is the most striking thing about the whole matter, — the way in which men's desire and men's dread are both called out by this constant coming of the ends of things. The human soul, as I have been saying, at once delights in and shudders at this perpetual finishing and re-beginning, this stopping and re-starting of the works of life.

Look first at man's desire of the end. It is, in the most superficial aspect of it, a part of his dread of monotony. There is something very pathetic, it seems to me, in man's instinctive fear of being wearied with even the most delightful and satisfactory of all the experiences which he meets with in the world. Is it not

a sign, one of the many signs, of man's sense that his nature is made for larger worlds than this, and only abides here temporarily and in education for destinies which shall be more worthy of its capacities? The friendship which seems to give you all that your heart requires, the occupation which seems to call out all your powers, the opinions which embody your whole present view of truth, — all of these, if you come to be more than you are now, must fail you, and prove insufficient. Even this earthly life itself, delightfully rich and various as it is, deep has been the instinct in the human heart which has felt that it would be a terrible thing to have it last forever. "I would not live alway," has been a true cry of the human soul. The wandering Jew, compelled to live on until the Saviour came again, has been one of the most fearful figures which have haunted the imagination of mankind. Man's mere dread of monotony, his sense of the awful weariness of living forever, has always made him rejoice that, far off but still in sight, down the long avenues of living, he could read the inscription of release, "Then cometh the end."

But this is the most superficial aspect of it. There is something deeper in man's desire to anticipate an end than this. Very early in every experience there comes the sense of imperfection and failure in what we have already done, and the wish that it were possible to begin the game again. There is a curious phenomenon that often takes us by surprise as it comes just in the full freshness of the new human life: The young man of twenty in his newly undertaken work or in his col-

lege-room breaks out in pessimistic railing at the misery and unsatisfactoriness of life. He sings great psalms of misery and disappointment. We laugh at that sometimes, and call it foolish affectation. It seems to be a feeble effort to create or imagine an experience which does not exist. No doubt that element is in it, and that is worthy of our laughter; but something else is in it also. The cry of the boy of twenty that life is too long, that the end is far away, that there are weary years to travel before the end is reached, — that cry does not come from very deep down in the soul. The soul is really full of joy in life, of gladness in the abundant days and in the years of bounteous promise; but this cry, so far as it is real, means the beginning of satisfaction in the fact that there is an end. Already there are some things in life which the soul would fain get out of life. The first sketch has so marred the canvas that the perfect picture seems impossible.

And as life goes on to more than twenty that conviction grows. The cry may not be uttered as it was at first. The habit of living gets to be so strong that men do not think so much about the end, but the expectation of it and the comfort of the expectation of it are still there. Tell any man that he, out of all these mortals, was never to die, that there was to be no end for him, and, whatever might be his first emotion, by and by must come something like dismay; for every man has gathered something which he must get rid of, something which he would not carry always, and so there is promise to him when it is prophesied, "Then cometh the end."

But it is not only the sense of the evil element in

life that makes men think with satisfaction of the coming end. So far as life has been a success and developed its better power, the same satisfaction comes. It is a poor and pathetic and desperate thing for a traveller along a dreary and difficult road to look forward to where the road evidently takes a sharp turn into the mountains and say to himself, "Thank God, there is an end to this! Thank God, the new road which I cannot see cannot be worse than this which I am travelling now!" But for a man to say, "This road is glorious, but I am glad to see that it stops yonder; for no doubt beyond is something yet more glorious still," that is a fine impatience. The noblest human natures are built thus, with such a consciousness of their own capacity, with such a feeling of eternity, with such an assurance of the richness of living, that all the best which they enjoy and see and are, becomes suggestive and prophetic. Perfectly satisfied with it for the present, the moment that you shut down the curtain on it and said, "That is all," the color would be gone, the exhilaration and splendor would have vanished. But let the life be filled with the spirit of the springtime. Let the voice in its heart always keep saying to it, "You are to go on filling yourself with vitality and joy, day after day, month after month, and then cometh the end, then cometh the end;" and then it is not a cessation of life but fuller life which the heart expects. The end which comes to the promise of springtime shall be the luxuriance of summer!

And so in many tones, yet all of them tones of satisfaction, men desire the end. Sometimes it is pathetic,

sometimes it is triumphant, but, either way, it rejoices in this arrangement of life by which things do not move on in unbroken processes to their results, but there are always endings and beginnings. It is like a great company of travellers coming together in sight of the resting-place where they are to spend the night, and lifting up all together one great shout of joy. Their hearts have various feelings. Some are glad because their day's task is done, others are glad because of the new task which, standing on this summit of attainment, they can see opening out beyond them for to-morrow; but all are glad. The end to which they are coming meets their desire.

But now, with all this full in our sight, turn to the other side and think of the dread with which men think of the coming of ends in life. There can be no doubt that such dread does come to men when those changes are prophesied which are always sure to be waiting in the distance. Indeed the general sense of the changefulness of things is what sends such a pervasive sense of insecurity through all our ordinary living. Let that be taken away, let the dread of change be driven out from this half-conscious possession which it holds on all we do and think and say, and it would be as if a dull and threatening day had cleared up into sunshine. The birds would burst out into song, and every twig upon the trees would quiver into bud and blossom.

Can we give any account of this dread which thus haunts the very feature of life which, as we have seen, wakens also the almost enthusiastic desire of men's

souls? We can at least see what some of its elements are.

The first of them is almost too dull and mechanical to give any account of itself, while, at the same time, it is very real. It is the sheer force of habit. It is the inertia of life. That this which is should cease to be is shocking and surprising. Let it continue. Let there be no disturbance. So the soul shrinks from change. So it shudders as, far away, it hears the murmur of the sea whose shores it must reach at last and end its journey and embark on something new.

Even in that dread of inertia there is something which is good. It is good for the tree to love the soil in which it grows and to consent with difficulty to transplanting, and not to have a restless habit of skipping constantly from field to field. It is good that the burden of proof should be on the side of change.

But there is something more than this mere force of habit. I think that very often one shrinks from the announcement of the coming end of the condition in which he is now living because, when he hears it, he becomes aware how far he is from having yet exhausted the condition in which he is now living. A boy has longed to be a man, but when he stands upon the brink of manhood and looks behind him over the yet-unreaped acres of his youth, he is almost ready to go back and postpone his manhood till he has taken richer possession of those harvest-fields. The scholar-period of some man's life is over, and the working days are ready to begin. How many students have stood and gazed back over the calm days of books, and hated the thought

of going out and leaving all the stores of learning which were lying there unlearned. And so of the great end, — the mighty change. Who wants to die so long as this great rich world has only had the very borders of its riches touched, so long as the fountains are springing everywhere of the mere overflow of one or two of which only our lips have drunk? This is no slight tie to life, no small element in the dread of death, — this sense of the unexhausted richness of the life we leave.

But even more than this, perhaps, comes in the great uncertainty which envelops every experience which is untried. The great mystery of the unlived is a strong element in our dread of change. Your friend may tell you everything about it, but you cannot really know any experience till you have passed through it yourself. The passage from light into light must be always through a zone of darkness. How we are feeling this in these days in which we live! Old social conditions are ceasing to be possible any longer. In their place new ones are evidently coming, which, when they shall have come, we know will be more just and happy and humane than those which we have known so long; but who that feels this most deeply is not conscious of misgiving and of dread as he enters with his time into the cloud of disturbance that hovers between the old and the new? Whenever a great public policy has exhausted itself and must be exchanged for a broader and a better, it is not mere blind conservatism, it is the true sense that in the untried ways must lie unguessed dangers that makes every wise man, however determined

he may be, pause in a momentary dread and hesitate a second — and, if he be a real servant of God, pray for new grace — before he cuts loose from the familiar shore, and sails out on to the untried seas. We dread the end even of that condition whose imperfectness we know by sad experience. This is a large part of the reason why the most miserable cling to life, counting it better —

> "to bear the ills they have
> Than flee to others which they know not of."

Thus we recount our human lot, and see man standing in desire and in dread, at once, of this perpetual change, this perpetual coming of the end of things. Blessed indeed it is for man, standing in such confused and mingled mood, that the end of things does not depend upon his choice, but comes by a will more large, more wise than his. If we ourselves had to give the signal when each experience would close; if the boy must say when he had been boy long enough, and summon the man's responsibilities to gather out of the vague world and rest upon him; if our own hand must be put forth to disturb the settled peace, and waken confusion and perplexity; if at last we must with our own finger give the sign that the time had come for the mortal to put on immortality, — how the desire and the dread would fight within us! In large part we are spared all that. The workman's voice has not to summon out of the east the shadows of the night in which no man can work. "It comes of itself," we say. We mean, and when we speak with perfect reverence and truth, we say, "God sends it."

God sends it! And when we do indeed say that, does there not come at once some sort of larger light into this mixed condition, this double attitude of man toward the changefulness of life of which we have been speaking? That thing which man thus alternately, and sometimes even simultaneously, desires and dreads, if we consider it only with reference to man, is all confusion. We can make nothing of it. Who can say whether it be good or evil, blessing or curse, wisdom or blunder, — this perpetual hurrying of all things to their end? But if around this instability of human life is wrapped the great permanence of the life of God; if no end comes which is not in His sight truly a beginning; nay, if the whole element of time is so lost in His eternity that not the beginning and the ending of experiences but their spiritual relations to our growing characters is everything, — then is there not light upon it all? To value everything which comes to me, and yet to know that not its form but its spiritual essence is really valuable, therefore to hasten while I have it to get out of it what it has to give me, and to even rejoice that some day in the loss of its formal presence I shall be able to make myself completely sure of the possession of its spirit, — that is the true attitude of the soul toward every good thing that God gives, — health, friends wealth, learning, life. But that true attitude the soul cannot keep toward them all unless they all mean God, come by His gift, and are instinct with His spiritual intention.

How many things there are of which we say, "I thank God I may do this, but I thank God also that the time

will come when I shall stop doing this and do it no longer." The business in which we engage to earn our bread, the slight associations and partnerships which we make for special purposes with our fellow-men, the journeys which we undertake, the schools in which we spend our years of study, the houses which we build to live in, — all these are of this sort. They are good and welcome because they are but for a while. Our mortal life, that too we are thankful for, but thankful also that it shall not last forever. But all this satisfaction in the temporariness comes only from its being enfolded and embraced within the eternity of the eternal. There must be something which does not pass away, something to which comes no end. The soul and its character, God and His love and glory, — it is because within these as the ends of life all other things are enfolded as the means of life, that we can be reconciled to, nay, even can rejoice in the knowledge that the means must cease when they shall have made their contribution to the end which must endure forever.

But to know no everlasting end or purpose, to have nothing but the means to rest on, to see them slipping out of our grasp and leaving nothing permanent behind, — that is terrible!

How is it with you, oh, my friend? There comes an end to all these things which you are doing now! Not because God snatches them out of your hands, but because they exhaust themselves and expire, because they are by their nature temporary and perishing, they die. You follow out any of them a little way and you come to this inevitable epitaph of their mortality, "Then

cometh the end." How is it then with you? Have you anything which is not perishable? Have you anything to which there comes no end? "What?" you say; "what sort of thing?" And I reply, "Any passion for character and love of God!" Those are eternal. There comes no end to those. You may change your dress, your name, your habits, your companionships, your work, — everything that you do, — but your passion for character and love for God, if you have them, you never change; they are the same forever. New temptations spring out of new soil, and the old hatred of sin leaps on its feet to fight them. New chances of goodness start up in some completely novel life, and the old eagerness for goodness cries out and claims them for its own. There is no end to the great ends of life. If one is living in the resolute pursuit of them, he may first welcome, and then rejoice to leave behind the several means which in succession come to offer him their help toward the attainment of those ends, as the traveller whose heart is set upon some distant city rejoices when he comes to, and then rejoices when he gets beyond, each field and river which must be crossed before he enters the far-off city-gates.

A noble independence this gives to a man's soul. Poverty comes up and joins you, and you say, "Welcome, Poverty. We will walk together for a while, and when I have done with you, when you have done for me all that you can, then you shall go. I will dismiss you with my thanks." Riches comes rolling up to be your fellow-traveller, and you say, "Welcome, Riches. There will come an end to you; but while you last we will

be friends, and you shall help me." Men praise you and you accept their praise as, when you are sailing in a ship, you accept a wind which will not last forever, but which while it lasts may fill your sails and speed you on your way. Men blame you, and you take their blame and bid it make you humble that you may be more strong, because more trustful of a greater than yourself when the sunshine comes again. The more your soul is set upon the ends of life, the more you use its means in independence. You use them as a workman uses his tools, taking them up in quick succession, casting them down one after the other, never falling in love with the tool because the work possesses him.

To-day, upon Palm Sunday, Jesus comes riding into Jerusalem in the midst of palm-branches and hosannas. Next Thursday, He is prostrate in Gethsemane. Next Friday, He is hanging on the Cross. Next Sunday, He is rising from the tomb. The great experiences come quick on one another. Joy crowds on sorrow, sorrow presses on the steps of joy. To each comes the quick end. Each is but born before it dies. But one thing never dies, — the service of His Father, the salvation of the world, the sum and substance of His life! Set upon that, with His soul full of that, joy comes and pain comes, and both are welcomed and dismissed with thankfulness because their coming and their going bring the end for which He lives more near.

Such be our lives! As Jesus was, so may we be, seeking an end so great, so constant, so eternal that every change may come to us and be our minister and not our conqueror; that even our cross may come as His

came, and men may gather round it and say, "Alas, then this is all! Alas, that finally it should all come to this!" While we who hang upon the cross cry, "It is finished," with a shout of triumph, counting the finishing but a new beginning, and looking out beyond the cross to richer growth in character, and braver and more fruitful service of our Lord!

THE END.

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